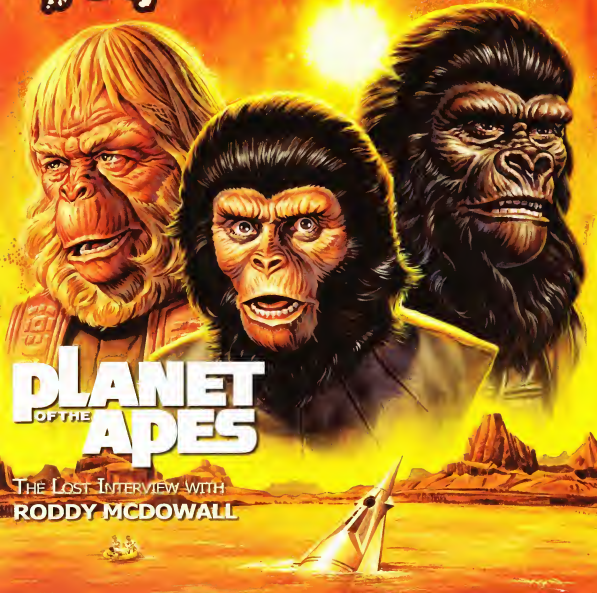


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THE LOST INTERVIEW WITH  
RODDY MCDOWALL



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AS EGON IN GHOSTBUSTERS 1984



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## OPENING WOUNDS

With 20th Century Fox reigniting the series, we now have the perfect opportunity to share the classic PLANET OF THE APES with new generations. But it also affords an opportunity to address a trend that is becoming alarmingly pervasive in entertainment journalism today.

When talking about APES, it's impossible not to do so without discussing the political and social climate of the 60s that inspired and was woven into the fabric of the series. APES is classic Sci-Fi in that it asks tough questions and holds a mirror up to society by using fantastic creatures and imaginary settings to create perspective. When dealing with topics involving politics, social issues, or religion, we have a strict policy here at FM to keep it factual and historically relevant. No soapboxing. Despite the widely varied political, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds of the FM team, we all agree that it's up to you, the fans, to determine your own beliefs and opinions as well as how and why you want to enjoy your entertainment.

Too many of our contemporaries use entertainment as an excuse to champion their ideologies and pet social causes, often by demeaning alternative viewpoints. They truly believe that their reasons for liking or disliking something are more valid than yours. Let's use PLANET OF THE APES as an example. While it's our job to acknowledge the real world circumstances that reflect and inform the APES series, it's *not* our job to tell you whether you should agree or disagree with the messages APES contains. You may not even consider those aspects of the series ever again. It's entirely possible you'll just be entertained. Maybe you'll be drawn to the incredible makeup work of John Chambers or how the actors were able to create emotion in ape costumes. Maybe you just love Chuck Heston. Regardless, how you enjoy APES—or if you enjoy it at all—is for you to decide, not us. Not anybody else. Worse yet, many try to shoehorn classics into our current social and political climate. Drawing parallels is one thing. Co-opting a piece of entertainment to browbeat your audience is another—intellectually bankrupt—thing.

Forrest J Ackerman created FM as a way to unite all those who loved monsters. It didn't matter if you liked to play sports or if you preferred to stay inside and build Aurora model kits, if you liked monsters—for any reason—you were welcome in the FM family. We believe the same thing today. Whether you like the deeper messages, the scares, the makeups, the stories, or even just the memories of watching monsters when you were younger, FM will always be home to those who call themselves Monster Kids.

Ed Blair  
Executive Editor

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## Carla Laemmle: 1909-2014

### Hollywood's Last Princess

She was Hollywood royalty in the truest sense. While she may have been born in Chicago in 1909, her destiny was always to go west. Her uncle, Carl Laemmle, established Universal Studios in California in 1915 and made arrangements for Carla and her family to live on studio property while she was still a child. Growing up on the lot allowed Carla a unique childhood where encountering celebrities or giant animals or spectacular sets was the norm. As an accomplished dancer, she was chosen to feature as Prima Ballerina in Lon Chaney's silent version of *PHANTOM OF THE OPERA*. She is fondly remembered as having spoken the first words in a Universal horror film. In the opening scene of 1931's *DRACULA* with Bela Lugosi, Carla is riding in a bumpy carriage with Renfield (Dwight Frye) when she delivers her famous line: "Among the rugged peaks that frown down upon the Borgo Pass are found crumbling castles of a bygone age."

Arguably, however, Carla's most important public role may have been that of an ambassador for classic horror. Even after she turned 100, Carla could be found at conventions or screenings greetings fans, signing autographs, and sharing stories of Golden Age Hollywood. She was tireless in her commitment to fans, always smiling and full of energy. When *Famous Monsters* threw Carla her 100th birthday party at the legendary Egyptian Theatre in Hollywood, she stayed well past midnight to greet every waiting fan and sign their items and pose for pictures. It was a magical night where guests like Ray Bradbury, *TWILIGHT ZONE* writer George Clayton Johnson, Bela Lugosi Jr., Ron Chaney, Sarah Karloff, and hundreds of family, friends, and fans came out to honor this beautiful woman who dedicated so much to preserving the legacy of Universal horror and serving as a bridge, a tangible connection to something that is so meaningful to so many of us.

She was a truly wonderful person with a kind and gentle soul. She was an inspiration whose memory will be cherished and shared by all those she came into contact with. She is remembered. She is loved. May she rest in peace.

Carla's biography *AMONG THE RUGGED PEAKS* is available from select online book retailers.





*As remembered by her niece,  
Rosemary Hill*

She was an amazing person. Very kind, very warm, very accepting, very forward-thinking. She made everybody else feel special, always. When I went to her house, it felt like I was going home. She was more like a grandmother to me than an aunt. We were very close. I spent maybe three or four nights a week at her house. I'd go over at about seven with some groceries, and sit on the couch and talk with her. And she was a night owl until the end. Even when I got tired around ten-thirty and wanted to leave, she would look at me and say, "You really have to leave already?"

She never wanted to say no to any project. She always thought that everybody's project was valuable and wanted to do her best work on it. My daughter, Antonia, does a web series called "Universally Me". It's about our family's history with Universal. A few months ago she decided to interview Carla, who didn't have any idea what a web series was, but still wanted to participate in it. Antonia went to her house with two hours worth of questions for her. Carla was very patient and answered every question, and Antonia recorded it on her camera. Between the questions, Carla would take long pauses to think about her answers so they would sound perfect. When Antonia showed her the playback, she noticed the pauses, and Antonia explained that she would edit those out, but Carla, watching herself, went "SAY SOMETHING!"

About a month ago, Meals On Wheels showed up at her door with her regular lunch and a film crew. No advance notice. They wanted to know if they could come in and get a comment for the news. As usual, she said of course. They started shooting her and asked, "What does Meals on Wheels mean to you?" And having the sense of humor that she did, she answered, "Well, I'd probably be dead without them!" She always knew what to say, and she had perfect timing.

She also truly loved her fans. She answered every letter; she answered as many questions as she could. As she got older, it got harder, because people would write very long letters. But she always tried. She got excited about those things. She loved everybody.

She requested that people make donations to either Motion Picture Television Fund, P.O. Box 51150, Los Angeles, CA 90051-9706, or Linda Blair's Worldheart Foundation at 10061 Riverside Drive, #1003, Toluca Lake, CA 91602.

For more history of the *Laemmles at Universal*, check out the *Universally Me* YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/toniacarlotta](http://www.youtube.com/toniacarlotta).



# TEAROR By DESIGN

D.M. CUNNINGHAM

## SIX STABBING SYLLABLES: MANFREDINI'S FRIDAY THE 13TH THEME

**1980** was a juggernaut for music and movie soundtracks. The iconic heavy metal band Iron Maiden launched their first self-titled album. The soon-to-be British sensation Duran Duran signed with EMI records. Brian Johnson became the new singer of AC/DC after the passing of Bon Scott. Movie musicals were hot: XANADU, THE JAZZ SINGER, FLASH GORDON, and THE BLUES BROTHERS were chock full of rising stars and radio hits. But lurking in the dark corners of the movie music world was something ready to slash its way into pop culture with the help of a machete and six stabbing syllables: "Ki Ki Ki Ma Ma Ma".

FRIDAY THE 13TH was a sleeper horror film produced and directed by Sean S. Cunningham. It was released on May 9, 1980 and surpassed all expectations, eventually becoming one of the biggest horror movie franchises of all time, birthing one of the most recognized movie villains in the world, and spawning one of the most recognizable movie soundtracks in our collective consciousness. The man responsible for designing that terror-filled music is composer Harry Manfredini.

**Famous Monsters.** When did you know you wanted to score films?

**Harry Manfredini.** From the time I was six or seven, the music in movies always got to me. I started studying music at six and soon I had this wonderful dream that I could write music at this magic piano of sorts, which would allow me to play any sound I wanted. And I could see the film up in front of me. And guess what? That is exactly what I do. So be careful what you dream.

**FM.** Was there a specific composer or film score that really got a hold of you and pushed you toward this goal?

**HM.** I think at the beginning I was not aware of composers in particular, just the power of music in film. I can only guess it was the masters Rosza, Newman, Herrmann, etc. My family listened to Italian opera—Puccini—and my brother introduced me to Stan Kenton jazz, so I had a mix of styles.

**FM.** You had worked with Sean Cunningham previously on other films. Did he approach you right away to score FRIDAY THE 13TH?

**HM.** Yes, I had done other films for Sean, and he came directly to me and said, "I am going to make the scariest movie ever

and you are going to score it." I guess that worked out for both of us.

**FM.** Can you tell us a bit about the scoring session? Where it was done? How many musicians did you have, and how long did it take?

**HM.** The session was done very inexpensively. There were thirteen players, counting me, in a basement in New Jersey. I had about three weeks to do the score from start to the final recording.

While actors Adrienne King, who played Alice—the film's final girl (in this writer's

humble opinion, one of the best final girls in horror film)—and Ari Lehman, who played the first Jason in the franchise, were busy bringing us into the mayhem on screen, Manfredini was busy creating a horrifying undercurrent of sound that clawed at our nerves like icy hands.

**FM.** Do you remember the first time you heard the score and what your response to it was?

**Adrienne King.** I remember hearing the entire score and meeting Harry at the FRIDAY THE 13<sup>TH</sup> cast and crew screening in New York City, April 1980. Right from the opening, we were gripping our seats! The music was incredibly haunting, creepy, clever and yet so beautiful, and at times even soothing.

**Ari Lehman.** I immediately recognized the influence of modern abstract music. You can really hear Harry's love of composers like Berg, Schoenberg, and Stravinsky. Horror films truly afford the opportunity to use such modernist formats more than any other genre. Perhaps early science fiction movies, with all the experimental sounds and plenty of Theremin, are the exception. However, the use of Richard Strauss's "Also sprach Zarathustra" in 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY changed all that for science fiction, leading to the grand romantic-era-style orchestrations now commonplace for movies like STAR WARS and STAR TREK.

**FM.** When was "Ki Ki Ki Ma Ma Ma" created?

**HM.** I came up with that sound as I was trying to solve the problem, dramatically, of the killer not being in the film until the final reel. That sound and the fact that we

pretty much only had music for the point of view of the killer made the music itself a character in the film. I never heard it with the picture other than in my head, but when they laid the music in, they went crazy for it, and I think it worked.

**AL.** Harry got one of the first digital reverb units ever produced the week he was working on the soundtrack. He recalled the use of singular syllables instead of words by that famous Polish composer Penderecki, and decided to try saying the words "Kill" and "Ma" into the brand new reverb unit. The rest is horror history. It must be one of the most widely imitated horror motifs to this day.

**FM.** When did you know that your music for the film had become iconic?

**HM.** I don't know, maybe when people came up to me and told me.

**AL.** The aspect of the soundtrack that is most remembered is, of course, the brilliant vocalized sound effect "Ki Ki Ki Ma Ma Ma" that everyone is familiar with, but not everyone knows that it was 100% Harry's idea. I feel that more attention should be paid to his musical effort here. Did you

know that the song playing in the diner on the radio, "Fly Away Little Sparrow", is Harry himself singing a country version of the instrumental for the infamous final scene when I emerge from the icy waters of Crystal Lake?

**FM.** I would place this score on the shelf with other greats like JAWS, PSYCHO, and HALLOWEEN. Why do you think these themes have such impact and staying power?

**HM.** Well, blushing, I thank you. I think they have such impact and staying power for the reason that they all became a character in the film. Not just a score—they were more.

**AK.** Those first opening escalating notes of FRIDAY THE 13<sup>TH</sup>, "The Overlay of Evil", are now so incredibly recognizable, and the "Ki Ki Ki Ma Ma Ma" so original and forever haunting. My man Harry is right up there with John Williams' recognizable notes in CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND.

**AL.** Harry's soundtrack broke away from the current trend at the time, which was inspired by Mike Oldfield's "Tubular



**ABOVE:** Betsy Palmer as grieving mother and slasher, Mrs. Voorhees. **LEFT:** One of the most genuinely terrifying moments in cinema history as a young Jason surfaces from the lake to grab an unwitting Alice.



Bells" soundtrack for *THE EXORCIST*. This repetitive piano motif became a clichéd standby for "scary music". While "Tubular Bells" was groundbreaking and dynamic, the imitations that followed were mundane and not terrifying. Clearly, Maestro Manfredini set out to re-capture the use of modern abstract music as we find used by the great Bernard Herrmann in *PSYCHO* or Ritz Ortolani in *CASTLE OF BLOOD*. This abstract, angular sound is jarring to the bone. It sets up an atmosphere of anxiety that increases the overall fear factor. Without Harry Manfredini's soundtrack, *FRIDAY THE 13TH* would not have had the edge-of-your-seat shock factor that has made it one of the most memorable and imitated horror films ever. **AK.** Have you ever watched *FRIDAY THE 13TH* without dialogue? I have, and what an education. Sitting beside Harry a few years back at the Sacramento Film

Festival, Harry and I did a commentary while fielding questions from the audience. There's not a whole lot of dialogue in these movies, so it's up to the score to carry the emotions of the performers throughout the film. Harry achieves this with such finesse, lingering and then pouncing! I listened to his spine-tingling score in a completely different way. And it was illuminating as well as magical.

**FM.** Ari, as a musician yourself, you know the power of music and how it plays a huge part in horror films. What do you think makes a great horror score?

**AL.** Honestly, I think a great film score somehow reflects the action onscreen in a way that actually highlights the emotions of the moment, connecting the audience to the action and emotion in a way that is immediate and seamless. The soundtrack should enhance the emotive quality of

the filmmaker's work and the audience's experience, yet not transform it. Harry's does this. In fact, it is amazing exactly how much the effect of music has on the moving image. Change the music and you change the feeling entirely. One thing that Harry pointed out to me about the soundtrack is that the incidental music only occurs when the killer is actually present. Other than that, there is a wide use of background and nature sounds: the forest, the rainstorm, and the wind in the trees. The silence adds a lot of suspense.

**AK.** Manfredini's music wraps us up in a blanket and carries us gently onto the roller coaster and then *whoosh!* Its lulls are so important: pulling the audience in slowly. We all settle in comfortably and then the shrill of the violins bursting to a screaming crescendo has us jumping up out of our seats! The musical smash right from the opening credits throughout the coaster of suspense to the unbelievable beheading on the beach—how does one score that? It was a first in so many ways. Our Harry was up to the task. Scaring the hell out of his audience! It's a true art, and he's a genius.

**FM.** With changes in technology and all the toys to use now, has it made scoring easier or more involved?

**HM.** Technology has changed the entire picture, some for the good and some for the bad. It has changed the way music is written, and the way it sounds, and the way it is used. It has changed the value of music. I would also say the advancements of the sound and visual components of film have been greatly changed and in turn, they have changed the music. Suffice to say, it's a new ballgame.

**FM.** I believe and sometimes argue that the score for a film is 50% of the film itself. Do you feel that *FRIDAY* would have been a different film without your score?

**HM.** I don't know how to answer that. I think whoever did the score other than me would have had that same challenge to create something that identified the killer with the visual. It would be a different film, but I don't know if it would be better or worse.

I shudder to think of a world without Manfredini's six stabbing syllables carrying our beloved hockey-masked monster through the dark woods of Camp Crystal Lake. But I'm certainly glad that I don't have to.

I wake up  
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SALEM'S LOT (1979)  
PG

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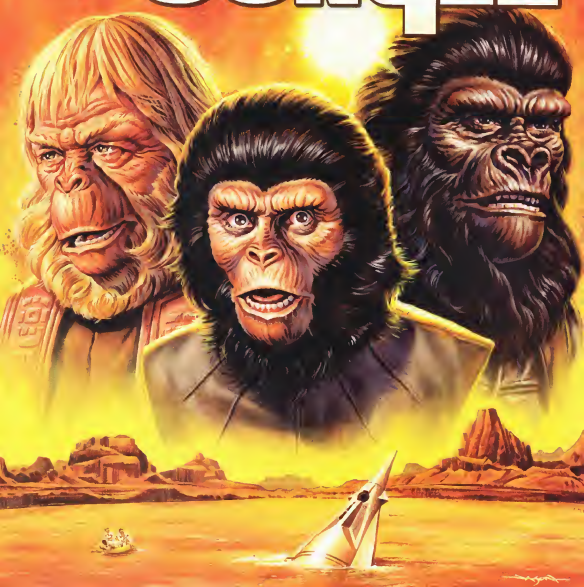
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# WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE





# APES IN THEIR TIME



One morning in late 1973, a small group of pubescent boys sat down in a Los Angeles classroom just before school started. Almost simultaneously, we exchanged smiling glances and asked each other, "Did you see it?!" We burst into excited conversation, which was silenced only after the bell rang and our teacher glared at us.

What had us so excited? We'd all seen the network television debut of *PLANET OF THE APES*.

Modern audiences accustomed to sharing initial reactions via social media enjoy a sense of this enthusiasm, complete with angry retorts from people in different time zones—or those who dare delay their viewing until a more convenient time! But nothing compared, in my young mind, to the overwhelming joy of discovering that, at some point hundreds of years in the future, apes would rule Planet Earth, and humans would be reduced to the lowest rank of servitude (especially all the adults in authority who dominated our lives).

To understand why the APES franchise seized the imagination of millions of young people and profoundly impacted a generation of future filmmakers, though, we need to consider the times in which the apes were born. When it opened in 1968, *PLANET OF THE APES* was not aimed at early teenagers or children, despite a premise that seemed tailor-made for young people. Press agent-turned-producer Arthur P. Jacobs, who claims to have discovered Pierre Boulle's French language novel (first published in 1963), pitched the movie as a fantastic science fiction adventure, hiring an artist to create paintings that showed cities populated by apes. The pitch was good enough to hook Charlton Heston, then a major international star, but the major Hollywood studios resisted, even with a screenplay by Rod Serling, the redoubtable creator of *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* (the script was eventually rewritten by Michael Wilson). As author Mark Harris wrote in his book *PICTURES AT A REVOLUTION: FIVE MOVIES AND THE BIRTH OF THE*

*NEW HOLLYWOOD*, "Science fiction was a genre that had almost no box office traction in the 1960s; audiences enjoyed the more outlandish technological excesses of the James Bond movies, but 'flying saucer' adventures were part of a B-picture genre that was more than a decade out of style. What Stanley Kubrick was planning with 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY was still a mystery."

Eventually, however, Richard Zanuck at 20th Century Fox warmed to the idea; his studio, too, could use a bit, and the Academy Award-winning Heston brought respectability, if not a guarantee of box office success—especially in combination with veteran director Franklin J. Schaffner, who had worked with Heston before on the period spectacle *THE WAR LORD*. Adding to that a science fiction concept had met with good success for the studio in 1967's *FANTASTIC VOYAGE*.

As it happens, APES narrowly beat 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY to the box office. Opening in February 1968, it garnered unexpectedly good (for a science fiction movie) critical notices, and gained momentum as it expanded throughout the U.S. Initially, the studio positioned it as a serious picture, describing it as "an unusual and important motion picture from the author of *THE BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI*!" Later posters made it sound more sensational: "Man... hunted... caged... forced to mate by civilized apes!" was accompanied by a fetching picture of Linda Harrison in an animal-skin bikini. (It may be that Fox was hoping to draw comparisons to Raquel Welch in *ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.* from two years before.) Another poster with that tagline left out Ms. Harrison and added "Not Suitable For Children" (the MPAA film rating system was not introduced until November 1968).

Anti-establishment sentiment was growing in 1968, and that was reflected in the movies that people chose to see. *THE GRADUATE* reigned as the #1 attraction for six weeks from late December 1967 through early February 1968, when APES topped it, holding that



position for three weeks. Word of mouth must have been good. Perhaps that was because it evinced sympathy for the civil rights movement; surely, the fire hoses that the apes used to subdue Taylor (Heston) and the other humans struck a recognizable chord for viewers, who had seen the same tactic used against peaceful demonstrators starting in 1963. Civil rights demonstrations were spreading throughout the country, with protests in South Carolina, North Carolina, and Wisconsin making the news in February alone. Humans are treated as animals in APES, with no rights to speak of; they don't even have the power of speech, which is what makes Heston's character such a threat to the ape establishment.

Certainly Heston felt that they had made a "very good movie," as he states in his autobiography *IN THE ARENA*: "The first APES actually has a philosophical point to make. Commander Taylor... is a cynical misanthrope, so disenchanted with his fellow man that, perhaps unconsciously, he's exiled himself from Earth, launched through time to an unknown future. The crash of his spaceship strands him in a simian civilization where he finds himself the sole defender of *Homo sapiens* as a superior species." There's no doubt that this philosophical point also resonated with audiences of the time, many of whom probably felt disconnected from a society grown increasingly violent. Martin Luther King was assassinated in early April of that year, followed by the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy two months later.

Studio chief Zanuck thought he knew why APES was doing so well. "It's a different kind of film, something people haven't seen before," he told Heston midway through the film's theatrical release. "There's a wealth of stories there. We have to do a sequel, maybe two." Heston resisted, eventually agreeing to appear in a sequel only out of gratitude for Zanuck's putting himself on the line for the first movie. But he had a major condition: he would only do so if his character was killed off. Zanuck, eager to improve his studio's bottom line, pressed ahead.

Sequels had fallen out of favor during the previous two decades, but the James Bond series, still a box office success after five installments up to that moment, had reawakened

Hollywood to the possibilities. The producers turned to Rod Serling and original author Pierre Boulle for sequel ideas before Paul Dehn entered the picture; he had been a poet before he became a screenwriter (*GOLDFINGER* and others). His script was not entirely satisfactory to actor James Franciscus and director Ted Post, who reportedly rewrote some 60 pages. Nonetheless, the film went into production in February 1969, with a much lower budget than the original in anticipation of lower grosses for a sequel. Released in May 1970, *BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES* featured Franciscus as another astronaut crash-landing, more apes, and mutant telepathic humans living underground. Even though the sequel was, admittedly, a lesser film than the original, it opened at #1 at the box office, a position it held the following week as well, and ended up earning more than three times its budget. Heston says he had suggested a climactic scene involving a doomsday bomb to wipe out the possibility of further sequels—an ending that dismayed both Franciscus and Post—yet the apocalyptic finale proved to be quite timely. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

had gone into effect in March, which meant that "doomsday bombs" were in the news. Days before the film opened, President Nixon gave



**Man..hunted..caged..**

**forced to male by civilized apes!**



**ROLE REVERSAL:** The Apes confer about their newly captive human prey, setting an early tone for the theme that would dominate the APES series.





**ABOVE: In BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES, a new astronaut, Brent, is sent to rescue the original Heston-lead group of explorers. Clearly, things didn't go so well. LEFT: Dr. Zaius and his orang counterparts at Taylor's heresy trial, emulating the "See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil" adage.**

the order for U.S. military forces to cross into Cambodia, and riots across the nation broke out to protest the possible widening of the Vietnam War; demonstrations continued throughout the month. It was an unhappy time, and the dour conclusion to the film matched the mood of the country.

The next three sequels followed in short order. Though constrained to an extent by ever-lowering production budgets, each reflected a particular vision that either coincided or played against the times in which they were released. With Heston out of the picture and Roddy McDowall back on board—he'd been unavailable for *BENEATH* because of a prior commitment to direct his own movie—Dehn was free to make Cornelius (McDowall) and his beloved Zira (Kim Hunter) the heroes of a story in which they travel back in time to 1973 Los Angeles. When *ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES* opened in May 1971, its popular reception was not as warm as the positive critical notices, although it was still profitable.

What made the difference? Producer Arthur Jacobs attributed the lower box office receipts to the fact that some were disappointed by *BENEATH*; he also thought that *ESCAPE*'s being "not so much science fiction" played a role. The film lasted just one week on top of the box office before being swept aside by the John Wayne Western *BIG JAKE*, which suggests other factors were at play. *ESCAPE* revolves around the loving relationship between Cornelius and Zira, but audiences couldn't help but be reminded of the smash hit *LOVE STORY*, which dominated the box office throughout January and February. By comparison, a great love affair between two chimpanzees couldn't compare. Also, the central message of peaceful relations between the races, be they humans or apes, was a bit out of step with audiences who, later in the year, would flock to *SHAFT*, Heston's *THE OMEGA MAN*, and William Friedkin's *THE FRENCH CONNECTION*. What was desired that year, it seems, was a bolder, darker vision.

The following year, *CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE*

*APES* delivered that vision, although initially it was deemed *too* dark. Jumping forward in time to 1991, the United States is under totalitarian rule, and apes have become the primitive underclass, enslaved to their human masters as service and domestic workers. The world's only talking ape, Caesar (McDowall), has been hidden away from this world for the most part, but when he sees the conditions under which his brethren must labor, he cannot remain silent, eventually leading to an armed uprising. The original ending was too bleak for test audiences, who found the idea of Caesar ordering the execution of humans unappealing.

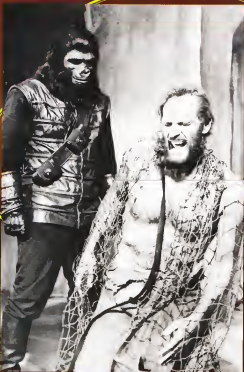
Still, the film's power is undeniable. It remains the strongest, most enduring entry among the sequels, and rivals the original for its topical relevance. In 1972, two notorious terrorist organizations, the United Red Army in Japan and the Red Army Faction in Germany, were active, and in the U.S., Governor George Wallace of Alabama was shot and paralyzed by an assailant. *THE GODFATHER*, which painted organized crime with a sympathetic brush, dominated the box office from mid-March through early June, when *SHAFT*'S *BIG SCORE* took over the top position. In this environment, *CONQUEST*'s revolutionary tone should have resonated more strongly with audiences. Hitting theaters at the end of June, though, it managed just one week at #1. Timing may have been an issue; later in the year, audiences flocked to *DELIVERANCE*, the Diana Ross-starring *LADY SINGS THE BLUES*, and even the patriotic musical *1776*, but they were not quite ready to embrace the idea of apes overturning human rule.

If the general populace was resistant to the daring charms of *CONQUEST*, then they were *really* not in the mood for *BATTLE FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES*. In January 1973, U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War was officially concluded, and soldiers began returning home. In May 1973, televised hearings on the Watergate scandal began, and daily newspaper accounts were holding the nation in anxious thrall. At the box office, the first half of the year saw disaster flick *THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE*

and children's movie *CHARLOTTE'S WEB* enjoy multiple weeks atop the list; *BATTLE* swooped in for a couple of weeks in June before being ousted by *LIVE AND LET DIE*, featuring Roger Moore's first appearance as James Bond. Escapist fare was the order of the day, with a strong nod to nostalgia. Who wanted to see a movie about battling apes and humans, especially when the premise recycled the mutants from *BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES*?

Though still beloved by die-hard fans (and children of all ages), the franchise was becoming threadworn, like a favorite overcoat that's been patched one too many times. It needed an injection of new-blooded appreciation—especially among those who had never seen an APES movie. It needed... television. Thus, we come full circle to the debut of *PLANET OF THE APES* on network TV in the fall of 1973, a broadcast that sparked the excited imagination of a generation of kids like me, who never got to see the APES in theaters. The sequels soon made their way to TV as well, and Fox organized "Go Ape!" marathon theatrical screenings of all five films in select cities in the summer of 1974. The network broadcasts led to a TV series in September 1974, which sadly only lasted one season, and then an animated series in 1975.

The *PLANET OF THE APES* legacy is much more than a marketing device to sell toys and hobby kits—though those are fun, too! The premise itself questions authority, as well as man's place in the universe; and all five movies, to a greater or lesser extent, wrestle with these major philosophical points. The combination of deep philosophy—and the topsy-turvy idea of monkeys in charge—has proven to be irresistible for generations of movie fans.



Expectations ran high in the summer of 2001. Having been in various stages of development at 20th Century Fox since 1988, a new installment in the *PLANET OF THE APES* series was finally arriving. Ape-mania had been building for nearly 30 years, and everyone was hoping that Tim Burton was the right director to bring a modern version to the big screen.

Burton wasn't interested in remaking a classic, and he became convinced that the studio didn't want to do that, either. He was moved by the "powerful" and "primal" idea of humans playing apes, so all he wanted to retain from the original was that idea: apes played by good actors. The production budget was, of course, orders of magnitude larger than that of the original films, but even so, there were limits. According to Burton, a lot of work had to be done on the script to bring it in line with the budget.

Burton's *PLANET OF THE APES* enjoyed the highest-grossing weekend debut in that sequel-crazy summer, reflecting a huge amount of pent-up demand for another movie about apes on horseback. The reaction among critics was mixed, and it's fair to say that the twist ending prompted many a raised eyebrow (at least, that was the reaction of my friends and I when we saw the film on opening night). Its reputation has suffered over the years, in part because Fox declined to make a sequel, which signaled that the studio lacked confidence in the future viability of the franchise.

In rewatching it recently, it quickly became apparent that Burton's *PLANET* has gotten a bum rap. It's an effective transformation of a 60s-style action drama into a modern blockbuster showcasing extended action sequences, with more self-aware comic relief. Mark Wahlberg's character is underwritten; he's simply a man going through the paces without any psychological underpinning, which weakens the overall effect. As a leading man, he didn't have the screen presence at that point in his career to compensate, leaving the audience in the lurch as far as a rooting interest is concerned. Yet, it's definitely not as lacking as I remembered. The production design, makeup, and costumes are superior; thanks in part to the much bigger budget, it's a more stylish production. Ape City is transformed into a complex, thrumming, vibrant habitat; the ape makeup is more detailed and looks more authentic. Tim Roth and Helena Bonham Carter make for lively counterparts on opposite sides of the ape/human debate.

The film also deserves points for endeavoring to tell a different origin story, which is probably why it rubbed against my grain at the time. The ending is superior to Pierre Boulle's book, though unable to capture the devastating impact of the 1968 original. All in all, Burton's *PLANET OF THE APES* is a worthy installment in the franchise, even if it now stands alone as an isolated entry in the canon.



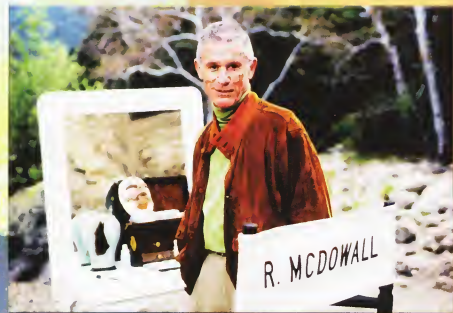


# RODDY MCDOWALL: THE LOST INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW BY DAVID COMTOIS • EDITED BY ED BLAIR

Roddy McDowall had a career that spanned six decades and included hundreds of films, television shows, and stage plays. He is fondly remembered for his work as a child in *HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY* and *MY FRIEND FLICKA* and later in films like *FRIGHT NIGHT* and *THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE*, as well as his animated voice work in Pixar's *A BUG'S LIFE* and the revered *BATMAN: THE ANIMATED SERIES*. But of all his roles, he is arguably most fondly remembered for the performances where his face remained completely hidden in the *PLANET OF THE APES* series. It was McDowall's portrayals of the kindly intellectual Cornelius in the first and third films, the revolutionary leader Caesar in the latter films, and Galen in the *APES* TV show, that made him the inspiration and beating heart that drives this beloved series forward as it continues to be discovered by new generations.

Recorded on Jan. 27, 1998, less than nine months before his death, this interview with *BEHIND THE PLANET OF THE APES* director David Comtois would be one of McDowall's final pieces of work. Originally featured on a limited edition release from Image Entertainment, the interview has been hidden away for over 15 years. Recently unearthed, this incredibly honest and profound chat with McDowall about his extensive work on the *APES* series was made available exclusively to *Famous Monsters*. It is a testament to the legacy of *PLANET OF THE APES* as well as the dedication and love from McDowall, who championed and celebrated this important work right up until his death. Despite his extensive résumé, McDowall held a very special place in the *APES* series, and opens up in this interview where he discusses, amongst other things, the challenges of bringing *PLANET OF THE APES* to the big screen and the trials and triumphs in make Cornelius and Caesar believable and empathetic characters from behind a wall of makeup.



**Famous Monsters.** You know about the evolution of the *APES* project. How did it come about?

**Roddy McDowall.** I only know what I know, which is that [PLANET OF THE APES producer] Arthur Jacobs was a good friend of mine. Arthur was a very volatile and gregarious fellow with a great tenacity. He had been in PR and he was known by everybody. I, somewhere in the 60s, was on a plane coming back from London with Arthur. We weren't traveling together, we just happened to meet up. And he told me about this project, and swore me to secrecy in relation to the ending. And he said he wanted me to play this character, Cornelius. Well it did sound absolutely fascinating, but I took it with a grain of salt. It was so surreal, a wonderful idea, I thought. As far as I know it had been a project with Warner Brothers. [BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S and PINK PANTHER director] Blake Edwards had it.

**FM.** Jacobs apparently went to a few studios, and eventually Edwards had to drop out of the project. Was there a resistance to science fiction at that time?

**RM.** Oh, this is science fiction isn't it? I never think of things in that way. No, I don't think so because certainly, in that category, there have been many films that had been very, very successful and ones that haven't been—JUST IMAGINE (1930) was a great flop, which was certainly science fiction. METROPOLIS, which was German, was a big hit in its arena. FORBIDDEN PLANET was successful. So, I don't think it was that. I think the resistance was—number one, it was a very far out premise. And number two, everybody in it,





with the exception of a couple characters, were apes, chimpanzees, or orangutans. The buyer just looked at the seller like they were out of their gourd, you know. But Eddie's [Edward G. Robinson, veteran actor chosen in 1966 to screen test as Doctor Zaius] test proved that a personality could register through this sort of dense makeup. And, if the actor was intelligent and thoughtful, which Robinson certainly was, intent could register. And I was absolutely intrigued because makeup's always been a fascination of mine—and two or three of the best opportunities I ever had on stage involved heavy, heavy makeup, most of which I did myself. And I always found that very inventive. You really disappeared inside the character. The problem with the first film was I came out to do the makeup tests and they put that stuff on my face to take the mask, and in those years it was not like it is now. I'm slightly claustrophobic. And those straws in your nostrils and, and I... [makes a gasping noise] Get me outta here! When it was all put on I began to

hyperventilate. I was really in trouble. And I went back to New York and thought, "I can't do this project. I'll die!" And then I had a long talk with myself, and psyched myself out because I realized the role was one... I mean, you don't get to do those sorts of things. They don't come along. And the challenge was immense, primarily the challenge of registering through all of this immense disguise and making it a part of oneself. And, how to be a human chimp, [chuckles] as opposed to being some asinine monkey or something. I would really have to psych myself out every time I would go into makeup because you had to get onto a different mind bend or you were in trouble. And it could be agonizing unless you applied a certain menu of behavior—you could go bananas. [Laughs]

**FM.** So you as an actor didn't mind going virtually unrecognized in that part?

**RM.** I really never had those problems. My ego is in another place. The fact of not being recognized is a compliment to me.

That was, for some people, a tremendous issue of despair. The interesting thing is that during the making of the first film—the content of which was unknown on the lot—there you are, anonymous, and you're going from one spot to another, and the expressions on peoples' faces. You did feel like you were in a zoo. People did begin to look and relate to you, this unknown whatever-it-is, like you were an animal. I know how those poor things felt. You know, being poked at. There were great larky things to do. I remember one time I was in that full drag and everything else, just walking into an executive meeting. I mean, I just walked into one of the big executive's offices. They were all seated, having some big discussion. I just walked right by the secretary, opened the door, went in and sat down. And everybody stopped. They didn't know who it was. It was just a chimp that had come in and was sitting there with everybody. Nobody wanted to look at me. They would have preferred if I was invisible. [laughs] I sat there and then got up and walked out. [laughs] Nobody ever referred to what had happened. [laughs] Another time, Julie Andrews was making *STAR!* And we knew each other very well from having done *CAMELOT* and were very close friends. This was during the first [*PLANET OF THE APES*] movie, so nobody was attuned to the fact of chimpanzees being around. And I remember going onto her set and lying down in front of her portable dressing room and knocking on the door and... [screams] She just... No, I didn't have problems about [having my face hidden]. [laughs]

**FM.** Did being covered up affect the choices of the other actors who played the apes?

**RM.** Well, I don't think that that is known until after the fact. It's like that old thing, if you say to an actor, "Oh listen, can you ride a horse?" "Oh, sure. Sure I can ride a horse." But they've never been on one, you know? And so they take three quick lessons and go and fall flat on their a--. But the point is, you're game for anything. And it isn't until you're in it that you realize the problems, and those can be translated in various ways. On the first film it wasn't just the appliance that was so difficult to deal with, it was the unknown. We were traveling in no man's land—and the heat! It was made in August. That was unbelievable. Unbelievable! And out on the Fox ranch. It could be like you were literally in a temperature of a hundred and thirty inside that. I can remember thinking I was certainly verging on senility because you can begin to really get dizzy in that sort of heat. Time







and time again, I thought I was going to faint. And people like Maurice Evans [Dr. Zaius], he was valiant, because that was very, very uncomfortable. The whole eating problem. [Ed. Note: Actors in ape costumes had a considerably difficult time eating underneath the extensive makeup] All of those things—because none of that had been thought out. Why should it be? It was an unknown. I certainly didn't realize that I'm allergic to spirit gum. It's always been uncomfortable. But it was a major, major problem. Now, I mean it's so many years later and all these sophisticated sorts of glues have come along. Liquid adhesive was just coming in, but they initially didn't want to use it. I don't know why. But we ultimately did because I couldn't; my skin would erupt. And one had to be very careful with the sort of adhesives or glues that we used. If the skin began to break down there was no road back. Kim Hunter [Zira] was so brave. Her skin was so delicate that putting it on took three-and-a-half hours; taking it off for her took over an hour. Me, I'd just go, "Get rid of it." But you had to be very careful about the maintenance during the day. Otherwise you could be rendered totally useless. If [the makeup] began to move they would have to go in there with orange sticks and glue; and then it became unbelievably uncomfortable. I never ate past seven in the morning, not until it came off. Because if the saliva was

activated, that was a breaking down agent for around here [points to jaw and lips], and it was very difficult to keep all of those very thin edges stuck with glue.

**FM.** Did they have little makeup pit stops?

**RM.** Yeah. And one of the things is that actors are so volatile and are, at least most of them, gregarious. Once you had that makeup on it was highly advisable not to speak at all unless it was inside the work at hand—because all of that was an irritant to the preservation of the day. And people forget. I remember it being one time nineteen hours, and my nervous system began to break down because there was no air.

**FM.** So you didn't have much socializing with the other actors who were playing the apes?

**RM.** No. You couldn't really. I was usually lying down. After the first movie—I wasn't in the second because I was directing a film in England—but when the third came along, I insisted I wouldn't make another one in the summer. That was just a stipulation. There's no way to think. After having done the first film I did insist that there be an air conditioned trailer to go in and just lie down, to be cool as much as possible between shots. Otherwise, it's a point of no return. And when you get that

exhausted, it's dangerous. If your whole system is just [takes a deep, exasperated breath] wiped out, you can have accidents.

**FM.** Who designed the makeup?

**RM.** John Chambers—who's a genius. But that whole crew—after ten years, partly involved with four of the features and the television series—one of the great experiences of my life was the heroic behavior of an army of makeup men who had to turn around—sometimes they'd be off only six or seven hours before they'd have to be back there doing it again. The minutia of it is so extreme. If you make one mistake when you're putting that stuff on you cause just bleeding agony for the person who's wearing it. If the nose piece goes on and your nose is twisted inside that, or when the ears go on wrong, it would be excruciating. And there's no way to take it off and start again. All of that had to be very carefully choreographed by the makeup men. They were terrific. It's very nerve-wracking—three and a half hours, putting this stuff on, and then the toupees and then the laying of the individual hairs over that to disguise it.



**Much of the heavy lifting for *PLANET OF THE APES* would fall on the shoulders of makeup artist John Chambers. Honing his craft on TV series like *THE OUTER LIMITS*, *THE MUNSTERS*, *STAR TREK*, and *LOST IN SPACE* gave Chambers the knowledge to work quickly, on budget, and with large groups of individuals. His designs had to be believable, practical, and hold up under intense shooting with lots of action.**

FM. Heston told us an interesting story; he observed at lunch breaks and things like that where the actors playing apes would kind of self-segregate...

RM. Oh really? [laughs]

FM. ... that within the apes there was sort of a segregation going on.

RM. I used to go and lie down. I usually do at lunch anyway, in order to get a second wind. A lot of them used to eat with chopsticks, you know. Nobody knew who you were if you walked around the lot as

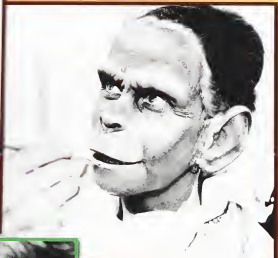
a chimpanzee going [makes ape noises]. People were highly insulted because they didn't know who was doing it. It's just like being out of school, you know, playing hooky. [laughs]

FM. Beyond the makeup, obviously, the character and the story must have attracted you in some ways.

RM. I recall my emotional response to the material, which was that I thought it was awesome. And one of the reasons I feel so

attached to the canon is because what they were ultimately saying is so compassionate and so moving and dramatic, and in many cases, so dear. I think it was one of the reasons it captured the imagination of children to such an immense degree. And I think it's a huge mistake that the various managements for the past three decades have not made more [films in this series].

FM. What do you think makes it so enduring?



**Actress Kim Hunter, whose skin was very delicate, would require significantly more time to have her makeup applied and removed than her male counterparts. But her transformation into leading lady Zira resulted in a scene-stealing performance that is universally praised for its depth and humor.**



**RM.** The emotions and the ideas are immediately accessible to an audience, and appreciated. And, it's all wrapped up in the surreal. Right?

**FM.** Do you think that makes it easier to deal with a lot of the issues?

**RM.** Mmmhmm. I think a lot of things can be couched inside those parameters that would become blatant, and maybe not as forceful, without the camouflage.

**FM.** Because there is a lot of satire, especially in the first one.

**RM.** I never met an ape I didn't like. Wonderful, wonderful, dear, dear things.

**FM.** The APES films weren't traditional Hollywood happy endings. Was that a certain period in cinema history that you think you could kind of get away with those things and still make popular entertainment?

**RM.** There's something resoundingly important and impressive about themes that keep telling us that if something odd or unknown comes into our society that, for the most part, there's a great wish to destroy it, reduce it, ridicule it. That's very moving.

**FM.** And you think that was kind of the

main theme of the films?

**RM.** It's part of it—the reluctance of the stupid and the injudicious to learn or accept another point of view.

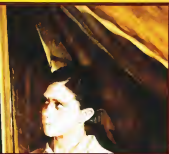
**FM.** Do you recall who came up with the ending for the first film?

**RM.** I knew about it on the airplane and was sworn to secrecy. Understandably, because it's a mind blower. Absolute mind blower. I think the filmmaking in the initial film is astonishing. And I can't understand why Twentieth Century Fox hasn't restored and re-released it on a big screen. It's a fantastic production. There's a whole generation... I mean, it's on television all the time.

But that's a postage stamp, as opposed to this huge wide screen experience. And that has been proven, in recent years, to be perfectly valid—putting old material back on the screen in its original, gigantic form. It's overwhelming, not only to a new generation who have not seen it in that form, but to the old generation who have seen it and forgotten. It's like going back to an opera. It's familiar material, but absolutely mind boggling. And the filmmaking is so damn good! When the astronauts have that moment in the film where they hear something, and then the audience suddenly

sees what they're hearing—which are these gorillas on horseback—that's wonderful! It's just wonderful filmmaking. He was very good, [APES director Franklin J.] Schaffner. Very, very good.

You know [the studio] had ideas of how to cut down time because the film was very expensive. What did it cost, the first? Do you know? POSEIDON ADVENTURE cost two million, which was considered to be huge. And nobody wanted it. That was considered so excessive. Well, APES was like, five million—a huge amount of money. And they kept trying to figure out ways to cut it down. The makeup situation was, of course, outlandish to the injudicious. Outlandish! They thought, put the makeup on in the studio and then we'll take them out to the location. So there were all these problems. It was before the fact of any public knowing that there was such a thing going on. So you could be on the freeway, and there's another car next to you, and you look and see a chimpanzee sitting in the front seat... [laughs] It could cause a little bit of a disturbance. Then, the next idea was to make us up and take us in by helicopter. I've got a huge amount of footage flying over Los Angeles. It was wonderful. Then they wanted us going



**ABOVE AND LEFT: In 1966, APES producer Arthur P. Jacobs would shoot a test for the film featuring Charlton Heston and Hollywood heavyweight Edward G. Robinson in the role of Dr. Zerkow. It is interesting to note how the makeup covered far less of the face than the full masks of Chambers' design.**

there without makeup and then being made up. All these variations to try and cut down what ultimately, of course, was the thing you couldn't cut down—the makeup time. They were working like Trojans. Now, Frank had to deal with all of these unknown problems. He was like the General of the Army. I never once saw him out of sorts. Never once saw him unkind. I never spoke to him about it. But I felt like something was breaking down in my system on the first film because I would get dizzy and, sometimes, I must have been very difficult to connect with. I remember one day he was asking me, “Is everything all right?”—because I couldn't remember a line. And it was. It was, I guess, heat prostration. [laughs] Something casual like that. But he never chastised. He was a lovely man to work with. Lovely.

**FM.** Do you recall seeing the film with an audience when it came out, and what the public's reaction was and what the critics' reaction was?

**RM.** I saw it for the first time in a projection room in New York. That's a very prejudiced area. I don't know if I've ever seen it in a regular theatre. I don't know if I have. Once you've been in a film you don't have the same reaction to the end product as if you're seeing it and you've had nothing to do with it. After all, you know the end. This goes for films I made when I was twelve and thirteen years old. When I'd

go see them I could remember what I was thinking in given scenes. It's like a déjà vu. So you're not seeing just the entertainment; you're seeing a whole complexity of your involvement. So my reaction as audience is technical. It's not visceral. I just know it's a wonderfully made movie.

**FM.** Do you recall if the success of it built slowly, or did it come out as kind of a “gotta see”?

**RM.** As far as I remember, both *PLANET OF THE APES* and *POSEIDON ADVENTURE* were instantaneous. It was like an avalanche of success. I think it overwhelmed everybody involved with it. I mean, it was just [makes jet engine noise] and took right off the high diving board.

**FM.** In terms of the audience reaction towards you, what did it do for your profile as an actor?

**RM.** Well that's strange, because there's a tendency on a lot of people who are hiring you not to really understand how complex it is to play those roles. For instance, you just







hear a lot of people say in authority. "Well, we don't need him. We can get anybody to play these parts. After all, they're hidden under all this makeup." Of course that isn't true. Because to enhance and override and penetrate through you need a certain acting adjustment and wisdom. You can't just stand up there. It doesn't work. You look like some schlemiel in a funny suit. I don't think on the commercial end that it led to any particular advancement. While it might be admired, how many chimp roles can you play? To this day there's just a huge cult. There was one disturbing aspect. A lot of young girls, pubescent girls, were absolutely desperately in love with a chimp. And that was disconcerting. I mean not with me, but with [Cornelius]. And that used to lead to certain disquieting scenes with the parents of given little girls who needed really to be spoken to. [laughs] Severely. Weirdo.

FM. It's interesting that they didn't take the Irwin Allen approach to try to make every ape a star...

RM. He was a terrific man and equally as tenacious in another way as Arthur was. But *PLANET OF THE APES*, that's another thing that Arthur did—the casting of Maurice Evans was wonderful, just the sheer weight and intangible aura of Maurice was what made Zaius. It gave him a different potency than perhaps somebody else who didn't have that sort of past and that reputation. Not that that was really of legendary content in films. It wasn't. Certainly in theatre it was, but it had a yeast to it that was very valuable.

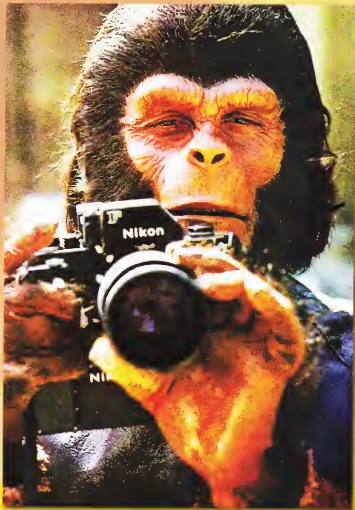
FM. Because then on the human side you have Heston with a very strong physical presence.

RM. In those years, Heston was one of the five or six bigger stars in films, and he had a monolithic, romantic, legendary reputation. He was top of the heap; and that was terrific that he walked into this unknown area. And there's no way that anybody could say, "Oh well, I knew it was going to be a big hit." It could have ended up being the most foolish looking thing on the face of the earth if all the elements hadn't coincided and melded together. It could have been ho-ho-ho. [laughs]

FM. So he was great to work with on the set? RM. Oh, I've worked with him before. He's a highly responsible man and a very giving and supportive comrade in work. He really is. He's a great gentleman, too.

FM. Maybe we could talk a bit about the arch of the series past the first one. Now, you weren't in the second one because...

RM. I was directing a film in London. So I wasn't available to be in the second. I've



never seen the second, actually.

FM. That was going to be my next question...

RM. No.

FM. Then you are in the third one. How did they get you back? Because essentially, in the second one they painted themselves into a corner a little bit because they destroyed the world...

RM. Oh, that. A lot of experts are continually trying to rationalize how one gets from one movie to the other. I don't pay any attention to that. You know, it's like saying that Frankenstein came back out after he was buried in ice. [In the second *APES* movie], they destroyed Frankenstein.

FM. How did they get you back for the

third one?

RM. He asked me. Arthur did. We were great friends and he also he liked my work, which was encouraging. That's nice, because actors are disposable objects. It's like being a fruit picker. You know what I mean? After a season's over, bye-bye. He wanted me to do the second. He wanted me to come back from London. But I couldn't do that—I was too deeply involved in the project I was working on. He asked me to do the third and the fourth. He was quite busy at the time.

FM. He was developing a television show apparently.

RM. Oh, yes. In fact, I did a pilot for him, which was disaster—but not his fault—





**Cornelius and Zira make a break for the original, human earth in *ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES*.**

with Stephanie Powers. Of course, we did *TOPPER RETURNS* (1973). And it was a wonderful, wonderful script which the network proceeded to dismember and destroy. And then, of course, disavowed it and claimed no responsibility. He did two or three television pilots and none of them worked. But the network, they were disgraceful toward the material.

**FM.** How about the transition going from Cornelius to Caesar?

**RM.** Hooray! [laughs]

**FM.** Were there changes in the makeup to make a different...?

**RM.** No! In fact, I had a huge argument with somebody—some press man who came for an interview—who insisted that there was a difference in the makeup between the third and the fourth, and I said, “No, there wasn’t.” It was the same mold. Well, he went on and on, *ad infinitum*, and it was very boring. You know that he really hadn’t thought it out. And the point is that Caesar is an entirely different human chimp with an entirely different lexicon—full of anger, full of hate—that naturally made everything

appear different. Well, [the reporter] went on and on and on and finally I blew up at him and told him that he just wished me to support his preconceived notion. And the fact is it comes out differently because it’s a different character. There’s sort of a huge classical tirade at the end of that film, which was very difficult to do. That film was very difficult to make because it was shot in Century City, at night. And it was in February. It was bitterly cold and I think twenty-three nights in a row, something like that. All night long. And that was demeriting for the crew and for the actors. That was really a majestic part to play, and bore no relation to the parental influences, because after all, there were none. He’s brought up by Armando [Ricardo Montalban]. And so he’s a really revolutionary character, crazed with anger and justifiable bitterness.

**FM.** Did you find him to be a better character to play than Cornelius?

**RM.** It wasn’t better. It’s just very different and the requirements were on a much bigger canvas than Cornelius. Cornelius is academic, charming, sort of

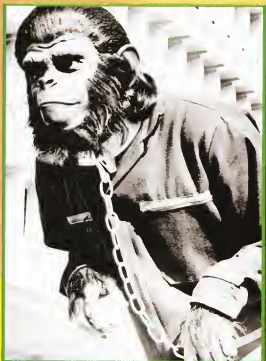
polite to a point of being self-effacing, a very responsible loving father and husband. But the parameters, inside those parameters it’s an adorable character to play, with a very winning personality. But Caesar was a wild man, absolutely wild—which is great to play.

**FM.** I remember there’s a shot in the movie with you running down Century City with a machine gun... you’re kind of macho...

**RM.** Well, that makeup is macho. [laughs]

**FM.** It was so physical...

**RM.** The big problem on the fourth one [*CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES*] was that on the second day I hurt myself very badly. Those feet were very difficult. The big toe was very dangerous because it could catch on things. On a dressing room step mine caught, and my ankle was sprained. And that was very difficult because they had to shoot through it. It had to be in ice all the time and shot with Novocain. And one of the weirdest things happened. There in the wigs—you know where the wigs are being put on, you know the hairpins put in to secure it? One



**IN CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES, Ricardo Montalbon as Armando takes care of Cornelius and Zira's wild and rebellious son, Caesar (also portrayed by McDowall).**

of the hairpins scratched my scalp. After a while this huge pain began to assemble. It was just excruciating. It was only when the wig was on. What had happened was that the hairpin, having scraped that dirt, got in and an infection started. And you couldn't see it because of the wig. It was incubating every time the wig was on—and the wig was on for what, twelve, thirteen hours a day. And a cyst grew on my head. That was, I mean, of such pain, I was going to scream with pain. And it grew—and it grew very fast. And finally they had to shut down, which they loathe to do. And it had to be taken out. I think I was gone for a couple a days there. It was the size of a great big marble. And that was very, very painful to deal with. So physically those things were added problems, which you really didn't want to have to deal with because the part was exhausting. The level of energy I needed to play Caesar was entirely different than Cornelius.

**FM.** How about getting you involved in the TV series? Who approached you?

**RM.** I asked them. They didn't come to me

about it at all. Arthur was my champion in relation to the films. And he believed there was a difference in the performances if I played them, which was very encouraging of him. But when he was gone, there was nobody that said, "Oh well, we must have Roddy McDowall for the series." I think they would have taken your Uncle Fred, you know, because those initial networks didn't have an understanding of what the ingredients were. Now they may dispute and say that's not true. But that was the truth. I went to them and said I wanted to play it, which cost me dearly. If you go and you say you want to play something, then you're dealt with monetarily from an entirely different power base. They didn't want me. Which is all right, because I got to play it.

**FM.** When you were filming, was it ever thought that this was going to be the last one, that you weren't going to do another one?

**RM.** Which?

**FM.** Any of the films as they kept progressing.

**RM.** I never think that way. The primary

thing when a project is completed is the old, "I will never work again." [chuckles] That's the mantra: I will never have another job. I don't mean that in a paranoid way; that's just one of the staples that's on the table, to never work again. I used to worry about that until Henry Fonda revealed that he had exactly the same thoughts—and he's one of the best actors I ever saw—exactly the same disease. But I never thought further than the content of the piece of work I was involved with.

**FM.** So when you were doing the fifth one you had no idea that would be the last?

**RM.** No. All I remember about the fifth one is that I didn't feel that it had the grit or measure of the other material. But that didn't mean that it should be the last. I've continually thought that there should be another one. Continually. Seems impossible that thirty years have gone by and there hasn't been.

**FM.** So would you do a sequel?

**RM.** It would depend on, number one, if I was asked; and number two, what the

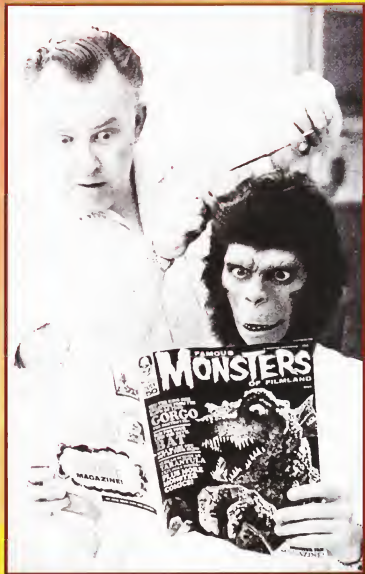
content happened to be. There's no reason to do one just for the sake of doing one. It would depend on whether the material was viable. I know there have been some very good ideas, down through the years, that haven't been entertained. But the idea of making features of STAR TREK was tabled for years, and now look...

**FM.** Would you rather do a sequel or a remake?

**RM.** Oh I think a remake is the most ridiculous idea on the face of the earth. Categorically, that is—why do a sequel? No, the original film was brilliantly made; and we know the opening surprise. The end is one of the classic moments of film invention. And even if people haven't seen it, it's one of those subliminals. You know it's somewhere in the consciousness. It's been spoken of so often. The end just blew you out of your seat. It'd be silly to mount however many millions, eighty million dollars, to do the same thing. You can't do it better than that. That was fine. No. Do a sequel, another variation. The Apes in Waikiki or... [laughs] Oh no. The Apes visit Ma and Pa Kettle. Remember Abbott and Costello? You visit Frankenstein or Captain Kidd.

**FM.** The performances really were breaking a lot of new ground.

**RM.** Well, yeah! Because it's a collective form you can't do it in a vacuum, it has to be agreed upon and embraced and supported. There's nothing worse if you think, as an actor, of an idea that is bizarre. Or if it becomes bizarre because it isn't accepted. Then you're out on a limb all alone. For instance, Dustin Hoffman, when he played Tootsie—I've never spoken to him about it, but that's an extraordinary invention, that character. Removed from the experience of seeing it, he's not a believable woman. However, a lot of women we know are not believable women. And that's what's so great; you could believe anything as long as the person playing it believes it. And what he did was absolutely brilliant. Absolutely wonderful. Like Jack Lemmon's creation in *SOME LIKE IT HOT*, where he doesn't want to be the girl, and then suddenly takes off like Charlie's Aunt. Girl's gotta think of her future. That's because the actor believes and has found some release in climbing inside the parameters of the character he's created. But that's no good if the director isn't there supporting and honing and gardening what you're doing. And that's why Schaffner was, I mean personally, such a terrific guy to work with. He could have shot it down and one wouldn't have been able to function.



**FM.** Yeah, that's such an integral part of the performance. You can see that there was a lot of thought put into that.

**RM.** Well, it wouldn't work any other way. It's strange, they couldn't get a word out without having a home that it came from that seemed logical. That's one of the great things about being an actor when you have the opportunity to play something that is really totally original. Because after all, one wasn't playing a chimpanzee, one

was playing an evolved creature that had those beginnings. You could go and sit in the zoo for as long as you wanted—you weren't playing that. You were playing something that had matured into some other expression. And reaching that decision was a fascinating journey, and that's sort of the joy of being in the line of business you're in. Because it hasn't been graphed before—you can't find it in a book. You have to think it up.

# PLANET OF THE APES

OF THE  
SURTEXT

REMOVING THE FRAME FROM THE SEQUELS' SOCIAL COMMENTARY

BY DAVID E. CHAPPLE

In the third film of the original Planet of the Apes series, *ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES*, Dr. Otto Hasslein (Eric Breaden) explains to real-life news anchor Bill Bonds the structure of time travel by using a painting of a landscape, then pulling back to reveal the painter painting the landscape, and on into infinity. This metaphor is also apt when looking back at the series of APES sequels and the landscape they were reflecting, as well as the artists who painted them. Much has been said about the seminal and first *PLANET OF THE APES* film, about its commentary and fake on the issues of the day (1968). But two of the following films, *ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES* and *CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES* (the two middle films in the original five film series), arguably have not been given their due. These are the two films that spun the series on its head and brought the issues it examined straight home to contemporary America.

Social commentary has been the heart of science fiction literature since Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *FRANKENSTEIN*. On television, too, this commentary is part of science fiction, most notably on shows such as Rod Serling's *TWILIGHT ZONE* and Gene Roddenberry's *STAR TREK*. Both series are known for their stories being "about something". In *STAR TREK*, social issues are dealt with in a futuristic setting, removed from contemporary figures and times, allowing the viewer to examine the issue rather than the person behind the issues. Rod Serling was known for his socially conscious television plays such as *PLAYHOUSE 90* and *STUDIO*

*ONE*, and his filmed anthology series *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* also continued to speak on issues of the day by using the science fiction template, which is a "comfortable" way to convey tough and controversial political and social issues to audiences.

This concept came to full fruition in the five original *PLANET OF THE APES* films released between 1968 and 1973. In fact, although the budgets were slashed significantly with each successive sequel, the original films were studio pictures that still had, at their core, something to say. These films also had a lot in common with some of the smaller budget films of the 1970s that were political and subversive: *CONQUEST* came out in the wake of the Kent State shootings and the Watts riots, and also had a lot in common with Haskell Wexler's hybrid documentary/drama *MEDIUM COOL* (1969), which was filmed in Chicago in the tumultuous year of 1968.

The release of the original *PLANET OF THE APES* was on February 8, 1968, and while it was still playing in theatres across the country, Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated on April 4. Wexler was filming *MEDIUM COOL* at the time, and captured the funeral preparations and placed his actors in the middle of it. When riots broke out in Chicago in the aftermath, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley gave the order to the Chicago Police Superintendent



to "Shoot to kill!" to stop them. Later that year, Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated on the other side of the country in Los Angeles, where the third and fourth APES films are both set. All of these events, and more specifically the 1965 Watts Riots, permeate the first four films in the series.

One of the main issues of the first APES film is our fear of nuclear holocaust (a very familiar fear in the 1960s) and its ramifications. The film examines racial and class structure as well. The three castes of apes in the film hold different statuses in their society: the gorillas are brute

muscle, chimpanzees are the scientists and intellectuals, and the orangutans are the ruling aristocrats. All three hold prejudices towards each other. **BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES** (1970) carries the nuclear bomb metaphor along from the first film, but also uses it as a platform for commentary on religion. The underground society of humans are mutants, forever scarred by the bomb that destroyed New York City—yet they now worship the last remaining doomsday bomb as their god and savior. Because of the revelation that the forbidden zone is populated by humans, the gorillas decide to conquer the area and rid their world of humankind once and for all as an act of self-preservation. Here, the metaphor of the Vietnam War is utilized by having the younger generation of apes with picket signs protesting the ape war of aggression, complete with placards reminiscent of ones seen during the Vietnam War protests across the country. The film ends with the expansionist gorillas attacking the human mutants, setting off the doomsday bomb, and destroying the world. Paul Dehn (**GOLDFINGER**), the writer for the four sequels, was no stranger to the subject of nuclear holocaust, having been traumatized by the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. It was his poetry on the subject that brought him to the attention of producer Mort Abrahams.

**ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES** (1971) opens in the near-present day of 1973 in California as Taylor's spaceship from the first film washes up the beach. The three astronauts turn out to be three apes who escaped the Earth's destruction in the previous film. Cornelius, Zira, and Dr. Milo are now the strangers in a strange land, the direct reverse of Taylor in the first film. Prejudices of our time are visited in the Dehn script, as well as issues dealing with feminism and euthanasia by government fiat—the latter being a reminder of the first film, as Dr. Hasslein learns of the potential destruction of the Earth from an inebriated Zira one night. To Hasslein, the only way to prevent the outcome is to abort the pregnancy of Zira and Cornelius' unborn child. There is a trial by the ruling class in

a Presidential Enquiry, and the decision is made to carry out the state-sanctioned abortion.

One of the themes in **ESCAPE** that was carried over from the first film's script by writer Michal Wilson is that of characters being put on trial in front of a governing body of politicians. In the first film, part of Wilson's inclusion of the show trial scene was rooted in his own experiences of being put on "trial" during the McCarthy Hearings in the 1950s, an effort by politicians to dispose of the perceived threat of communists in the entertainment industry and America in general. In the first film, it is Taylor who is put on trial in front of the ruling class Orangutans led by Dr. Zaius. In fact, the HUAC hearings and blacklisting are a common denominator among some of the film's makers and participants. Michael Wilson, who wrote the first **PLANET OF THE APES** script, was also the writer of **BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI**, but was blacklisted at that time and his name was not on the Best Screenplay Oscar for that film. Kim Hunter (Zira) had also been blacklisted as a result of her being

From humans in chains to protests and courtroom drama, the social undertones of the series helped to carry the film beyond the standard Sci-Fi fare of the time.



named in the HUAC trials by a former director.

Whereas the fear of the nuclear bomb was the major issue at the forefront of the first two films, the following films, by their very nature of being set in the contemporary world, dealt with the down to Earth and present day issues that people were actually experiencing in their homes and neighborhoods. In the same year that the first APES film was released, several events occurred that would influence and culminate in CONQUEST: the assassination of Martin Luther King, the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy, and the infamous 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention. In bringing the apes to the present day in his script for ESCAPE, Paul Dehn was able to examine these issues practically in real time.

CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES (1972) is the much darker and more biting film in the series. It is also the film that almost didn't get the G rating because of the original cut's violence and gore. It is considered by many to be the best of the original series' sequels, and indeed has the most to say about society during the time of its making. By setting the film in the turbulent city of Los Angeles, the filmmakers were able to directly examine the racial tensions that were being dealt with in the early 1970s.

The film picks up 20 years after baby Milo was left calling for his mama at the end of ESCAPE. He is now full grown and speaking, a high crime in the oppressive fascist society of 1991 Los Angeles. (Ironically, the film is set in the cold and futuristic sharp-angled concrete known as Century City, the paved over former backlot of MGM Studios that had to be sold to keep the company from bankruptcy in the aftermath of box office bombs and cost over runs by the former studio heads, and the cause of the delay in the first film from being greenlit.) The plague, as predicted, has wiped out all dogs and cats, resulting in apes being taken in as replacement pets, but over the years people realized that apes were semi-intelligent and therefore are now trained as servants and slaves. Milo, now named Caesar, is introduced to this world by circus master Armando (Ricardo Montalban) and soon witnesses and is appalled at the treatment of the apes by their human masters and shouts out at the human oppressors, resulting in Armando getting interrogated by authorities and killed, and Caesar, whose secret is out, being tortured. Soon Caesar escapes and infiltrates the ape training facility and begins to teach them to arm themselves and fight back, eventually leading an uprising and revolution against the human slave owners.

One of the defining moments for filmmakers of CONQUEST were the Watts riots of 1965. In the movie, director J. Lee Thompson took great pains to shoot the end riot and ape takeover to make it reminiscent of news footage of that event. As originally filmed, the film was violent and disturbing, bringing the news footage of the day from the small television to vivid color on the big screen. There was no shutting off the television or switching channels here, and the audience had no choice but to deal with and think about what was happening in front of them. In fact, the images were so disturbing to some people at a test screening in Phoenix that filmmakers had to recut the film, removing much of the in-your-face violence, and even changing the ending to be more optimistic in order to get a G rating. The original ending had the Caesar-led revolution violently winning against Governor Breck and setting the stage for the takeover of the apes. The new ending, with a voiceover by Roddy McDowall, had Caesar making a benevolent speech about how the apes would rule with compassion instead of violence.

Thompson took great pains to shoot the film to convey the oppressive state the world was in at the time. The opening shots of the film have black leather boots in the foreground with the ape slaves framed





**IN CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES, MacDonald (Hari Rhodes) pleads for mercy on behalf of the governor. In the original ending, available on Blu-ray, the governor is violently killed.**

between them. Many shots in the film have objects blocking the frame such as bars, chain link fences, and walls, evoking the feeling of the apes being in cages.

It is also no coincidence that the production design and costumes evoke Nazi iconography. Thompson purposely shot the film to evoke fascist Nazi memories. Even actor Don Murray, who plays fascist Governor Breck, spoke fluent German, translated his own script into German, and rehearsed his scenes in that language to help give the feeling of the Nazi delivery in his speeches, as he felt that Breck would have fit perfectly in the setting of Nazi Germany. Clad in all black and wearing a turtleneck, he was a severe figure indeed. He is literally up to his neck in darkness. Almost all the human characters in the film are either clothed in all black or muted shades, while in contrast the only color is seen on the apes, who wear red, green, and yellow jump suits.

Roddy McDowell had been with the APES series since the beginning (except for *BENEATH*) playing chimpanzee Cornelius, his extraordinary skill as an actor coming through the thick make-up evoking tremendous emotion and praise from audiences and critics for his performance. But it was his portrayal of Caesar in *CONQUEST* that really brought all his skill as an actor to bear. In the film, his character runs the gamut from

innocent, sheltered, and naïve to showing anger at seeing the treatment of the slaves, sadness upon learning of the death of his adopted father Armando, and resolution as he begins to gather apes together for a revolt against their slave masters. It is a mesmerizing performance, 180 degrees from his portrayal of Cornelius. It is quite extraordinary that when watching the performance you don't even look at the makeup, but look at the character of Caesar. You are totally invested, mostly because of McDowell's performance. As the main character and focus of the picture, McDowell, a 40 year old actor, had to convey the twenty-something year old's predicament in a society in racial conflict.

While Jerry Goldsmith, who had scored the first and third films, was not to return for *CONQUEST* and *BATTLE* because of budgetary reasons, composer Tom Scott would pick up the baton for the two remaining films. His score for *CONQUEST* would be excised significantly in the editing process, but what remains is powerful stuff, sounding like rattlesnakes amid metallic percussion during the attack on Breck's Ape Management "Roman Legion" riot police. Many of the instruments sound as if they were being played on their helmets and riot shields. In the end, when the apes beat Breck to death with their rifle butts, a reprise of Goldsmith's *PLANET OF THE APES* score makes a return among

the shouts of the apes, signaling the end of humanity's rule and the birth of the planet of the apes.

Much like messages in science fiction and in *CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES*, the power of context is the theme of Haskell Wexler's *MEDIUM COOL*, which can be considered a spiritual, contextual, and conceptual brother to *CONQUEST*. In fact, as Eric Greene points out in his book *PLANET OF THE APES AS AMERICAN MYTH*, Breck's "Kill!" order to annihilate the apes' "threat" echoes Mayor Daley's "Shoot to kill!" order to the Chicago protesters during the Democratic convention of 1968—which is of course where Wexler's *MEDIUM COOL* is set. *APES* producer Arthur Jacobs, Rod Serling, Thompson, and Wexler were socially and politically conscious filmmakers that were witnessing the same events and had similar ideologies. It is surely no coincidence that their films and television work reflected the same events and views.

The *PLANET OF THE APES* films have always been a reflection of the time and culture we live in. The Hasslein painting demonstrated by Dr. Otto Hasslein (Eric Braeden) is a prime example and arguably illustrates how commentary in film works. In context, it is demonstrated as an explanation of time travel, but on the subtextual level it can be used as a metaphor, as art reflects the cultural landscape. The filmmakers of the *APES* series were artists looking at the time and reflecting back on what it all meant. Now, in 2014, we are the spectators looking back at the films and at the artist(s) making the work of art that was in turn painting a reflection of the issues that society was dealing with. The artist and the subject are both the observer and the observed.

In the final moments of *MEDIUM COOL*, the crowd of protesters at the 1968 Democratic National Convention chant to the news cameras, "The whole world is watching! The whole world is watching!" It is a message that can only be delivered by the power of world cinema. And one wonders, if the apes in *CONQUEST* could speak, would their chants at the end of *CONQUEST* be the same: "The whole world is watching! The whole world is watching!"

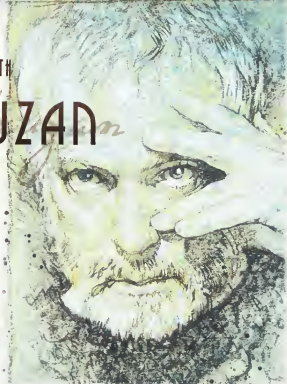
In his commentary to *MEDIUM COOL*, Haskell Wexler says, "When we say 'the whole world is watching', I feel that somebody else is taking a picture of us taking a picture."



## SELF-PORTRAIT: AN INTERVIEW WITH

# DREW STRUZAN

**O**ver the past forty years, legendary artist Drew Struzan has given moviegoers some of the most iconic film posters of all time. From *STAR WARS* to *INDIANA JONES* to *BACK TO THE FUTURE* and beyond, it's hard not to mention the movies and Drew Struzan in the same breath. With the recent release of the documentary *DREW: THE MAN BEHIND THE POSTER*, fans for the first time are getting the chance to see the artist responsible for changing the way audiences view the movies. Recently, I had the pleasure of sitting down with Mr. Struzan at his studio, where he graciously spoke with *Famous Monsters* about his long career and the past and present state of the movie poster.



BY NEIL McNALLY

**Famous Monsters.** To begin, can you tell readers what it was like revisiting your life for *DREW: THE MAN BEHIND THE POSTER*?

**Drew Struzan.** It was weird. I wasn't there when they were interviewing everybody else, and then these people said all these things about me, I had no idea. I worked most of my life alone. I didn't know what to think about the movie. Why would anybody want to see a movie about me?

The one thing I told the movie makers was, "You can do anything you want. Just don't make it bad. Don't make me look cruel." I just want people to be happy, and I was glad that it came off that way. Whatever I leave behind, I want it to be loving and friendly and beautiful.

**FM.** What kind of childhood did you have?  
**DS.** Well, as a child, you don't know because you have nothing to compare yourself to, but I'm an introvert, so I was kind of cut out to be an artist because I like to be alone. It was a real gift to me early on that I had the art. In fact, people recognized

it so much that Stanford University sent people down to San Jose to study me. They came and collected all my drawings that I had around the house and took them to study because they were unusual for someone my age. Of course, I don't have any of them because they never returned them. I always wonder, "Are they secretly watching me to see what happens?" [laughs]

**FM.** What inspired you to attend art school?  
**DS.** When I was 18, I just asked the teacher in high school what was the best place to get an art education, and he said the Art Center in Los Angeles. I was really naive because I didn't have parents teaching me anything. So I go, "Okay, I'm going to go to art school. I'm going to learn how to do this!" I applied without any help or direction from anybody. I just took a bunch of my drawings and put them in the mail and sent them off. They wrote back and said "You're accepted." They don't do that at Art Center—you have to take two years of college before you enter because it's strictly an art education, and they want a

broad education. That they took me at 18 was unusual because I was right out of high school. So, I packed up... you know, which wasn't much. It was like a t-shirt, a pair of jeans, and a tooth brush [laughs]... and went to L.A.

**FM.** What were your experiences at the Art Center?

**DS.** I was hungry. I didn't have a place to live most of the time. I keep saying to people I would go in the front door in the morning and they'd come and find me and kick me out because I hadn't paid. Then I'd go out the back door and walk around to the front door [laughs]. My line was, "Well, I'm going to pay you eventually"... and after one semester, I applied for a scholarship, and they gave it to me. The rest of school I went on scholarship, which was a real blessing.

But you know, that was in the 60s. It was in Hollywood, L.A., the Sunset Strip, the Whisky A-Go-Go! I didn't get to do any of that because I didn't have any money. I was going to school full time—six days a

week, four nights a week, with homework and everything. I was living pretty much the same way I had always lived, except now I was extremely happy because I was drawing and painting and learning every day. That's what I wanted. I didn't have any vision for what my future would be except that I would do this to live my life and I wanted to know how to do it as well as I could.

**FM.** When you left art school, was it easy to find work?

**DS.** School didn't teach me anything about the real world. [laughs] I'd just gotten married. I had a brand new baby. I couldn't go to New York for illustration work, and I didn't have a job... I worked seven days a week, like twenty hours a day. The baby cost us \$1500 and I made maybe \$3000 that year. [laughs]

After a couple years, I went to an employment agency and said, "I know it's silly, but do you find jobs for artists?" They gave me an interview at Disney and an interview at a place called Pacific Eye and Ear, which was a place that just specialized in album covers. Within a week, Disney called and offered me the job, but so did Pacific Eye and Ear. Disney offered me a job painting backgrounds for animated films, and I thought, "That hasn't got much of a future." Pacific Eye and Ear was doing

album covers every day. I said, I'll take the job from you, because you get a paycheck every week. We were making like \$250 a week. We could finally eat and pay the rent. It was grand.

**FM.** Of the album covers you designed, do you have a personal favorite?

**DS.** Well, that's always the question isn't it? I have to answer it the same. I understand that a lot of people live by their favorites. They're attached to them; they follow them. But I live in the future. As an artist for the sake of my audience, if I had a favorite, what would I do except copy it every time? Then I would cease to be creative...

I do like a lot of them. I look back at *Welcome to My Nightmare*; it's a wonderful piece. I was doing an interview for *Sabbath*, *Bloody Sabbath*. It's the fortieth anniversary of the album cover, which is great fun. It's completely different than *Welcome to My*

*Nightmare*. I got to draw for these people and they were all so wonderful. All I was doing was drawing pictures. I wasn't a director or producer, fellow musician, nothing. But they all loved the stuff. Alice Cooper said he had more fun sitting next to me watching me draw his album cover than he had making the music...

**FM.** How did designing album covers eventually lead to movie poster art?

**DS.** I worked there, I thought, for two years, but the owner says it was three. The blessing of that was that everything I did was printed, and people saw it... so I got to do cool stuff, really cool stuff. That cool stuff started appearing not just on album covers, but on billboards. People saw it and said, "Hey, we should use this guy." I was sitting at Pacific Eye and Ear drawing album covers and they started getting phone calls from the movie industry, saying "Can



**ABOVE:** Cover for Alice Cooper's classic album, *Welcome to My Nightmare*. **RIGHT:** Ballet legend Vaslav Nijinsky as the Golden Slave in *SCHEHEREZADE*.





we hire Drew to work on the movie?"

I wasn't searching. I was just glad to be getting a paycheck. That's how I wound up in the movie industry, basically. It was a long hard road until they came looking, but they did.

**FM.** When you receive a commission for a poster, what is the first step in the conceptual process?

**DS.** Art is emotional; it's not words; it's not explaining—it's not even illustrating. If you look at my illustration works, they're not illustrations. They're not telling a story. I willfully paint the emotion of the movie.

As I got better known in the industry, I got to talk to directors and I saw why, and how, and what motivated them to spend years of their life and millions of dollars on making a movie. I try to attach to that motivation, that inspiration. Then I'll read the script and I'll see a rough cut of the movie, and see thousands of still photographs. But the first thing I try and capture is "What motivated you?", and what comes through in the movie as far as that emotion goes. That's where I get my inspiration. Then as I see the pictures, and see the actors, and see the colors, and the story... subjectively, I see in those where the emotion is. Then

I start putting it all together. What people see is what I want, which is the emotion. Then they want to go see the movie to see how that works out. That's why the studios and the directors like the work, and that's the power of art. It reaches the heart; it's not your head, it's your heart.

**FM.** What artistic mediums do you generally prefer to work in?

**DS.** I work in them all, and again, it's the personality. Is it better as an oil painting? Is it just a drawing? Or is it acrylic? Is it airbrush, or is it sculpture? It's what's best for the piece of art. So I can work in all



mediums, and I do I mix them up and invent new ones. Because the picture itself speaks to me as far as its appropriate medium.

**FM.** So it changes depending on the project?  
**DS.** Exactly... in the movie industry, because they make you change what you've already painted, there are a lot of things you can't do. You can't do a watercolor, because you're doing it on raw paper and you'd have to start fresh. I started sometimes with oil paintings and learned that oil paint takes time to dry, and it's hard to meet the deadlines. I wound up designing materials that went more quickly because of deadline.

In a lot of the movie posters you've seen,

I've changed heads and bodies and collars and all kinds of stuff on them. You look at the art and you cannot tell it's been altered. *HOOK* is a good example. Robin Williams loved his portrait. Dustin Hoffman thought his was beautiful too, but he said he didn't think it was his character. He said, "Why don't you just come over to the house, and I'll show you exactly what I want to look like." So I went to Brentwood, to his house, and he took the pose he wanted. The point is that I had to go back to that finished painting, paint him off—and he's half the painting as you know—redraw it, and repaint it. You look at it and you can't tell that I painted off half the canvas.

What medium do I like? What's my

favorite? Whatever suits the project.

**FM.** How did *STAR WARS* initially come into your life?

**DS.** It came to me strangely. It had come out initially and was such a big hit. It wasn't just that one weekend shot. It just stayed, and stayed, and stayed in the theaters. It stayed so long that George Lucas thought it needed some refreshing in its advertising. He hired Charlie White III. He was a marvelous artist, but he didn't do portraits. To make a long story short, Charlie called me and said, "Hey, I got this job. You want to share painting it? You paint the portraits, and I'll paint the machinery." Subsequently, it became George's favorite poster. From then on, he would call me directly. He's a grand guy to work for because he's respectful and he let me do what I wanted. He wasn't telling me what to do. He would show me the movie. I would get to go up to Skywalker Ranch. It became one of the biggest blessings of my life. I worked for him for thirty, thirty-five years.

**FM.** If asked, would you consider doing the posters for J.J. Abrams's upcoming *Star Wars* trilogy?

**DS.** Well, I can only answer straight up, which that is you can't say anything until it's done. Everybody says it ain't real unless I do it. They'll ask in their own good time if that's what they want.

**FM.** Almost as long as *Star Wars* has been your relationship with the Indiana Jones films. Can you take us back to the beginnings of that?

**DS.** Kind of the same deal. Richard Amsel did the domestic *RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK* poster, and they called me to do the foreign poster. For [*TEMPLE OF DOOM*] they didn't call me first either; they did one and it came out. It was a big hit. I think it was George that then called the design studio and said "Get Drew!"

What was wonderful for me was that with the freedom, I kind of reached out a little bit with my style and my approach. I made it [*TEMPLE OF DOOM*] grittier, more masculine, and really beefed it up with color and stuff. They loved that, and they said "From now on you are the Indy artist."

It's kind of how my life grew. It wasn't me at first, but when I got involved, they fell in love with it. Steven Spielberg was loyal. George Lucas was loyal. So

as I worked with people, they just kept coming back, and I guess it was because they liked the stuff.

**FM.** You also had a long partnership with the Muppets. Tell us about your experiences working for Jim Henson.

**DS.** Oh, Jim was great. The first movie poster I ever painted was with a guy named Tony Seiniger. He owned Tony Seiniger Advertising. He had the biggest boutique of movie studio posters. When Jim made the first Muppet movie, he came to Hollywood and he went to Tony's. Tony had posters all over his studio. He said "Go around. Write down the ones you like, and we'll bring in the artists and you can look at their portfolios." Jim went around and wrote them all down. He then told Tony, "This is easy. It's all the same guy."

Tony called me and said, "We got the job. We're going to go to New York and we're going to do a photo session with the Muppets." I had never been to New York. I didn't travel anywhere. I was poor. I couldn't do anything. [laughs] We went to the Henson offices and met with Jim around a table. Frank Oz was there. We all talked about what they were thinking and what they might want. We kind of designed it as a committee, but it was easy because they were all creative guys. They weren't all arguing and bitchy and stuff. I did three different posters because they liked them so much. I did all kinds of Muppets stuff until Jim died. It was too short a time, obviously. One of life's delightful experiences. He was a good man.

**FM.** One of your most iconic images has to be from the John Carpenter classic **THE THING**.

**DS.** I don't know why they called me. But the studios gave me a phone call—which was typical—"Have you ever seen the movie **THE THING** from the '50s?" That was my direction. I had the concept of drawing nothing, but making it interesting and scary.

My wife and I work together, and she learned to do photography. We lived up in Lake Arrowhead, so I had a parka on and all this stuff for winter. I just stood outside and posed and had her take some pictures of it. She developed it and made a proof sheet, and I picked the one I liked. Then I did a drawing of it and sent a fax of it to the studio. They wrote back and said "Fine. Paint it. We need it tomorrow by 9."



I painted all that day and through the night. At 9:00 in the morning—"Knock, knock." There was the guy. He didn't even take it to the studio. He took it to a photo studio so they could shoot it and start printing it. They would put it under glass in those days and they had to wait a little bit until it was dry.

It's one of the most favorite posters I've done. I did it in a day.

**FM.** Recently, you've been involved with Mondo and their line of Universal Monsters posters. How did that come about?

**DS.** As I recall, Mondo had been calling me for years and asking me to do posters with them. It sounds a little presumptuous, but I know that they can't pay much to have somebody do their posters. Then one year they called again, and I said, "What if you print something I've already done? That way it's not going to cost you anything." I had done a Frankenstein painting just for fun. That's all I do. Even when I'm not working, I'm painting. They saw it and said "Yeah, we'd love to use that." Of course they had a good time with it. Then they



came back the next year and said "Let's do another one."

They were getting so successful they opened a gallery in Austin, and they wanted a show of the monsters in the galleries. They were asking me if I had any more monsters, and I said "No, but for the opening I'd be happy to do a drawing for you." I had such a good time drawing I said "I'm going to do another one." Then I said, "I would like to do this monster too." I don't know how many I ended up doing. I did a bunch just because I was having fun.

**FM.** Speaking of monsters, was any of your poster art ever featured in *Famous Monsters*?

**DS.** I went online to see if the magazine ever used one of my pieces, and the only one I could find was "Food of the Gods" (FM #128), which I did when I was really, really, really young. It's about big rats eating people, but there's no blood. There's no gore. It's kind of pretty, actually. Even on that one, it's been written that I was the first to do it that way, and it kind of changed the way people would look at it. Even though it was horror, I didn't put any horror in it. The rat wasn't biting her leg off. That's just how I always looked at things, even horror.

**FM.** Did you ever get an opportunity to meet Forrest J Ackerman?

**DS.** I was doing *THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON*, and because it's an older movie, I needed references. I had some other friends that were into horror, and they said that Forry let people look at his files. I called him and he said "Yeah, come on over."

As everybody does, I took him to lunch, and he showed us all his stuff. His home was like a castle in the Hollywood Hills. His basement was full of 8X10 files. He had Abraham Lincoln's chair that you always see in the photographs. He had the KING KONG model. He always wore Dracula's ring—the real thing. He had all this great monster stuff. He had the robot from *METROPOLIS*.

**FM.** Why do you feel hand-drawn poster art has fallen out of favor with film studios?

**DS.** What makes you think that? [laughs] Yeah, I considered myself a dinosaur for a long time, because I was the last person doing it. It's the computer that changed things. Now anybody can take a photo, anybody can change it, anybody can crop it, anybody can color it. It's grown and grown and grown until they think, "We can do it cheaper and faster with a computer."

**FM.** Do you still get asked to do poster work by the studios?

**DS.** The honest truth is that the last five years I've hardly had any work at all. That's why you haven't seen my work, because

audiences, the normal human beings, say, "What happened to our posters? These things are ugly. We hate them. They don't do anything for us. We can't hang them on our walls." People are starting to ask again, but I'm retired. I just took the high road. I kind of like not having to work seven days a week and into the nights. I get to be with my grandchildren and spend quality time with my wife. I want to paint what I want to paint in the time that I want to paint it.

**FM.** In your own personal art, what are the themes that you try to convey to the viewer?

**DS.** It varies. You see, I change what I paint every time because I'm always looking, always saying "Oh, what if I did this? What if I did that?" But there's a theme in them, which I think the best word for is *taste*. As you do things, you find things that you like and work for you, so I'm always looking for beauty. I'm looking for love. Truth. I paint truth; I don't paint lies. I paint all the principles that I've learned to live by.

**FM.** Your work has inspired so many people over the years. What inspires Drew Struzan?

**DS.** I learned from all the masters, and I stood on their shoulders. There are filmmakers, and friends, and authors, and artists all over the world; they all inspire me. But what keeps me going is my wife. She's always there. She's always helping me. She's always kind. She's the light of my life because I never loved anybody, and when I met her she loved me and I loved her. For 47 years, now.

**FM.** In closing, what does art teach you about the world?

**DS.** It makes me happy to do it, and it makes other people happy to see what I do. So, that was and still is as close I come to being happy. And I like that what I make makes the world a better place. It's prettier, it's encouraging, it's more inspiring, and it makes people happy. It's a simple thing, and yet it fulfilled me quite a bit because those are the things that I treasure in life.

Neil McNally is an entertainment writer living in Los Angeles. To read more, please visit [www.neilmcnallywriter.com](http://www.neilmcnallywriter.com).



I wasn't getting any. The only people that were hiring me were my friends: Frank Darabont (*THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION*), *THE WALKING DEAD*, Guillermo Del Toro (*HELLBOY*), *PAN'S LABYRINTH*). They hired me, but the studios wouldn't use the posters. I did *HELLBOY*; they wouldn't use it. I did *PAN'S LABYRINTH*; they didn't use it. The directors want me; the studios think it's old fashioned.

But now it's starting to come back. People want poster art again because



CREEPING DEATH

# EAST OF WEST

PUTS HUMANITY'S FATE IN THE HANDS OF DEATH

BY ED BLAIR

*"This is the world. It is not the one we wanted, but it is the one we deserved."*

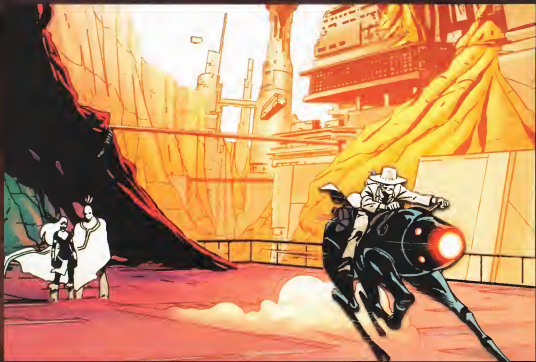
And with these words the audience is introduced to the world of Image Comics EAST OF WEST. Co-created by writer Jonathan Hickman (AVENGERS, FANTASTIC FOUR) and artist Nick Dragotta (FF, FANTASTIC FOUR), EAST OF WEST is one of the most original and engrossing books to hit shelves in recent years. The story takes place in a futuristic version of the United States where, at the time of the Civil War, a great event fractured the country into seven nations. From the remnants of the Union in the east to Mao's exiled Chinese nation on the west coast, an uneasy peace has been hanging in the balance for decades.

Amidst this high tech wasteland, three of the four horsemen of the apocalypse have been reborn and are now working secretly with representatives from each of the nations to fulfill their destiny and bring about the end times. But it is the fourth horseman, Death, that has abandoned his brethren. He stalks the land, looking much like a clad-in-all-white Clint Eastwood, riding a cybernetic steed and wielding his six shooters with an accuracy reserved only for the king of the reapers. And it is squarely on his shoulders that the future of humanity rests. In this world almost completely devoid of hope, Death has found a reason to live, a reason to stray from his destiny, fight back against his apocalyptic accomplices, and ultimately walk humanity back from the brink.

EAST OF WEST is most easily (lazily?) called a Sci-Fi/Western. But that is wholly inadequate. Try to imagine the Man With No Name from Sergio Leone's classic films as he rides across the plains of Arrakis, in a world populated by cities where Deckard and his fellow Blade Runners would be hard at work—and that barely covers the basics. Ancient mythologies fuse with technological monstrosities as individuals and nations fight for their desired futures. And at its core, a story of a man trying to protect the ones he loves.

Jonathan Hickman and Nick Dragotta shared their thoughts with us about what goes into creating the many moving parts that stop just long enough to bring the world of EAST OF WEST together.





**TOP:** Death races away from his Wolf and Crow spirit guides on his heavily armed, cybernetic stallion. **ABOVE:** The remaining horsemen, still in their youthful forms, on a quest to find their missing brother and bring about the end times.

**JONATHAN HICKMAN**  
(Co-creator, Writer)

**Famous Monsters.** While *EAST OF WEST* contains its fair share of characters, locales, and storylines, how would you describe the overarching concept of the book?

**Jonathan Hickman.** At the end of the world, all that remains is finality—all there

is left to do is die, and Death is the only one who can save you. So, thematically... if the world is a singularity obsessed with self-consumption, maybe the right move is bending into the curve.

**FM.** I've read that when you and Nick starting talking about *EAST OF WEST*, you were looking to do a Western, while

he wanted to draw Sci-Fi. Aside from combining the two settings, what were your core ideas and concepts that coalesced to become this much larger post-apocalyptic (or pre-apocalyptic) story?

**JH.** I think we both talked a lot about visuals, mostly. It doesn't feel like a world if it's not well-designed, at worst. You want to have a good feeling regarding the



**ABOVE:** Before being returned to this world as children, the horsemen did what they do best...end things. Violently. **RIGHT, FROM TOP:** Death celebrates life; Xiaolin, princess of Mao's kingdom with a bit of a tendency towards incredible violence (hence the shackles); Death's horse accommodates when he needs to hop on.

atmospherics. I mean, it's all lies, but does it feel solid? Does it feel real? We also talk a lot about steering away from the easy out. What's the logical step here for the character? Okay, now... let's not do that.

**FM.** The central characters in *EoW* are the four horsemen of the apocalypse. While Death is about what you'd expect

in this environment, the other three are children—very old and very powerful, but in child form nonetheless. What is the significance of that?

**JH.** They died and were reborn. If Death had died, he would be a child now as well, but he survived... much to the chagrin of the others.

**FM.** One of the great themes in *EoW* is that of hopelessness, that we've brought about our own destruction. But in that despair there is a sliver of hope, in the form of Death and the life and love he helped to create (or so it would seem). Of the horsemen, what struck you about Death that you wanted to single him out and place a considerable amount of narrative weight on his character



above the others?

**JH.** I think everyone needs a love story.

**FM.** The series has, at times, very sparse dialogue, much like a Sergio Leone film, and lets the visuals carry a lot of the narrative (Death at the Great Wall in Issue 4 comes to mind). Was that a conscious decision or just a byproduct of the story?

**JH.** It's a choice. Sometimes you want to get the hell out of the way. It isn't like we don't have just as many moments where I throw up words all over the page. I think, like most people who make this comment, what you're noticing is the contrast—which is super.

**FM.** How long do you plan to run *EoW*?

**JH.** Nick and I talk about this a lot. Right now, we think around 50-60 issues. That could change, of course.

**FM.** Much of what you write contains Sci-Fi elements, be it in very different settings and often massive in scale. What were the stories (books, movies, comics, etc...) that influenced you and helped guide you on your creative path when you were starting out?

**JH.** I don't really know that there's a path. I'm a big Frank Herbert fan. It's probably more along the lines of filling your life up with stories and ideas, and then eventually you spit out the bastard child of all that

garbage. Who knows? I don't really overthink it. I just know that if I need them, the ideas are always there.

## NICK DRAGOTTA (Co-creator, Artist)

**Famous Monsters.** Primarily, you've done a lot of work with Marvel, including some very memorable work with Jonathan on *FF*, wherein all the content and licensing is ultimately controlled by Marvel. How do you like the change moving to the creator-owned style of Image Comics?

**Nick Dragotta.** It's been an incredible experience. It's both creatively and financially rewarding. There's nothing like Image Comics in our business, or any entertainment business for that matter, and it's a model that should be celebrated.

**FM.** We've established that Jonathan was leaning towards creating a Western, but you were championing a little Sci-Fi. What was it that was pushing you in that direction?

**ND.** The things that I look at and inspire me are too vast to name. I take from everything, consciously or subconsciously. If I had to pick one thing, I'd say manga. The best of it is so imaginative and expertly crafted. It's a constant source of inspiration and something to strive for.

Wanting to do Sci-Fi also stems from the creative liberties Sci-Fi offers. With a straight up Western, we'd have to adhere to certain rules to maintain believability. Jonathan's original idea still had the four horsemen, so it wasn't far off. We just moved the clock forward a bit.

**FM.** How has your creative process been affected by *EAST OF WEST*, where you're essentially creating everything from scratch, doing massive world building, and there are no perennial favorites or corporate missteps about who can and cannot die?

**ND.** For me, it makes the process so much easier. Drawing what you want beats drawing something you don't any day.

**FM.** Sadly, stories of writers and artists having almost zero communication on big name titles are all too common these days. Since *EoW* started out as a collaboration between you and Jonathan, and since Image gives you the freedom to put a lot more skin in the game, how frequent and extensive is the communication between you two vs. your experience on other books?

**ND.** We talk a bit; we work mostly Marvel style, so Jonathan writes the dialogue after I draw it. We'll talk more at the end of each issue as we edit it into shape for print. For me, [communication] is really one of the best parts. Deciding the page turns, maybe switching a panel, tweaking dialogue all in service to try a capture that point you want readers to get. Another boon for Image Comics: there are no ads getting in the way of our story and messing up the page turns.

**FM.** Visually, *EoW* has a lot of things going on. There are classic Western elements and Sci-Fi elements. The action is reminiscent of manga in that it's very fast and very fluid. Even when it's chaotic, there's a certain elegance to it all. When Death draws his revolver, you can almost feel the speed of it. What were you drawing from, and what were some of your goals in order to create this seamless integration of so many different distinct genres?

**ND.** The goal is to serve the story. Make it as entertaining as I can for readers and myself. Everything you mentioned can be a tool in your storytelling toolbox. It's all interchangeable, but I can look at Sergio Leone films for attitude and gesture, the aesthetics of Moebius and Sci-Fi concept art for world building, and manga for deconstruction and new storytelling techniques. *EAST OF WEST* is open to all of these things, and all of them excite me.

**FM.** I have to ask—how did Death's "horse" come to be? I tried to describe it to a friend once and the best I could do was "a Quarter Horse crossed with an Imperial speeder bike armed with Yamato's Wave Motion gun". Even then I don't feel like I did it justice, but it's a great example of the unique and dynamic visual world building you've been able to do with this series.

**ND.** Death's horse was really a happy accident, and goes with the above about serving the story. The horse shape gives me the gesture I want as he travels through he plains. I elongated

the legs so he rides above everyone, empowering. I put the cannon for a head because I knew in *Issue Four Death* was going to need the firepower. He was shaped by the purpose that was needed. I also like that it's really not something you want to stand in front of.

**FM.** Are there favorite characters or settings for you in creating *EoW*, or set pieces that really allow you to open up artistically? I ask because there are some action scenes where there is almost no dialogue for long stretches and the art is completely telling the story. It's rare in comics these days for there to be extended scenes with such little or no text.

**ND.** Favorite character... maybe the Ranger and his dog? Who knows the limits of that dog, and what the Ranger will do with him. As for the little dialogue, I see it as finding a healthy balance. Let the visuals

carry the load when necessary. Strip it down, accentuate the beats with dialogue. It also goes back to creator-owned comics. There are no strict scripts or limits on pages. If I want to add a page or two I can, where at the corporate gigs, there's a limit.

**FM.** What were your artistic influences that helped to start you on your path when you were young and encouraged you along through your stylistic development?

**ND.** I think you can trace it back to Jack Kirby. He started this racket. Explore your imagination, make it heavy, and finish on time.

*EAST OF WEST* is in comic shops and online now. There are two trade paperbacks collecting the first two arcs of the story to get you caught up on all the action.



# INTRODUCING TARCHER'S SUPERNATURAL LIBRARY

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Theosophical Society cofounder Henry Steel Olcott's fast-moving memoir details his partnership with occult explorer Madame H. P. Blavatsky and his spiritual awakening. *Isis in America*



The only nonfiction book by Sax Rohmer (creator of the Fu Manchu mysteries), this 1914 classic surveys magic, witchcraft, and the occult throughout history. *The Romance of Sorcery*

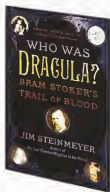
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A comprehensive guide from the author of *Real Wolfmen*, on the history, sightings, and folklore of American monsters including Bigfoot, chupacabras, the Jersey Devil, and more. *American Monsters*



The rollicking true story of Ray Palmer, the legendary writer-editor who revolutionized science fiction publishing in the 1940s and 1950s. "Lovely and entertaining." —*Publishers Weekly* *The Man from Mars*



The acclaimed author of *The Last Greatest Magician* uncovers the source material behind Bram Stoker's classic novel *Dracula*. *Who Was Dracula?*



# BROTHERS IN NUCLEAR ARMS





# GETTING TO GOZER

THE MAKING OF GHOSTBUSTERS WITH MICHAEL C. GROSS

INTERVIEW BY HOLLY INTERLANDI

**B**ecause *GHOSTBUSTERS* has taken on a kind of mythical status for those of us who grew up in the 80s, it's difficult to remember that at one point, it was just a movie waiting to get made. Beyond the script and actors, it needed visuals and effects, and that's where producer Michael C. Gross came in. Gross, who over the years has produced such memorable films as *HEAVY METAL* and *KINDERGARTEN COP*, designed the iconic *GHOSTBUSTERS* logo, supervised the monster design, and led the charge in the effects department. Little did he know that it would turn out to be the biggest film of his career, and certainly one of the most cherished by comedians and monster fans alike. Gross, a perpetually gregarious and no-nonsense guy, was happy to take us behind the scenes to discover the anatomy of this much-loved movie.

**Famous Monsters.** For people who might not know, can you describe your role in the original movie, the animated series, and the sequel?

**Michael Gross.** GHOSTBUSTERS was my first live action film. I was Associate Producer on it. At the time, being a producer actually meant something; it doesn't mean much anymore. But whether I associate produced, produced, or executive produced—and I did all three, over the two movies and the TV show—the job was always the same: getting the movie made. My specialty, if you'd want to call it that, was special effects and creature design. I'd come out of doing HEAVY METAL [Ed. Note: See FM #257!] and had some experience with Ivan [Reitman, director of GHOSTBUSTERS and producer of HEAVY METAL]. We were the power team—we put that movie together, and a lot of the conceptualization involved artists I had worked with all the way back to my days at *National Lampoon*. I had a wealth of knowledge about artists and some knowledge of special effects. Ivan had never done a special effects-driven film—had never particularly had an interest in doing one, but here it was—and so he came to me and said, it's your job to put together a special effects team, to conceive of a lot of ghosts, to take care of the visuals.

Consequently, I was the one who designed the "No Ghosts" logo. I was a graphic designer, so it was a logical thing. The logo itself didn't begin as a huge concept that was going to sell all the advertising; it was just something we needed to slap on the side of a car. One of the artists in storyboarding was Brent Boates, and he had worked for me in Canada on HEAVY METAL, so I brought him down to Marina del Rey and said hey, you need to help me with this ghost logo. He drew about ten variations of how one might perceive a ghost. I narrowed it down, and what we ended up with became an icon quite by accident.

**FM.** You mentioned that a lot of the cast and crew ended up being the same people from *National Lampoon*, HEAVY METAL, and even STRIPES and CADDYSHACK. How much of the finished movie was a result of your frequent collaboration? What kind of experiences on previous movies did everybody bring to the

GHOSTBUSTERS set?

**MG.** Well, in terms of special effects and design, my first step was getting John Bruno, who was the art director at Boss Films, and had also been the director of the "Taarna" sequence in HEAVY METAL. Boss Films was an effects studio that we created entirely from scratch. John Bruno brought along everyone he trusted from the HEAVY METAL days—Brent Boates and some others—and I played my usual role, which was to separate myself from the internal process and objectively find designers who could bring a fresh, clean look to the film. When the effects department creates a creature, especially when they have no time, they're relying on their ability to bring that thing to life, so they don't go out and break new ground. They rely on old-fashioned methods that are tried and true, that they can work out immediately and inexpensively. I was the one who had to step outside of the process, bring in new artists, and say, Here's what you've got to work with. Go. It was a balance between practicality and imagination. Sometimes I just had to put my foot down. The library ghost, for instance, we envisioned one way; but it's a very fast shot, and when it came down to the wire we had to rely on some armatures and bits of ghosts that we dug up from other movies. Others creatures, like the terror dogs, were not in the script originally, and it was left

wide open as to what they could be. Were they dog skeletons, or were they literally like dogs just because they were referred to that way in the script? I went through an unbelievable amount of exploration with artists trying for variations on each creature.

**FM.** I read somewhere that Bernie Wrightson did some of the designs. How extensive was that?

**MG.** There is an excellent book called THE MAKING OF GHOSTBUSTERS, which is very hard to find now—it came out just after the movie in black and white, and didn't have a very big press run—that is all art and concept drawings, and Bernie is in there a lot. For almost every visual problem we had, there was a Bernie Wrightson solution. That said, very little of what he did actually ended up on screen. But that's the filmmaking process—you sometimes have to have three or four versions of something to find out what you don't like as well as where you should be going. I would say, here's Bernie's version, and Ivan would maybe like one thing about it but sway towards another artist. It was very free flowing. I need concepts quickly, and we would hire artists by the week. I don't remember exactly what we were paying, but for a comic artist, it was a very nice income. In a lot of cases we even moved people to California to do the design work.





# WHO YOU GONNA CALL?



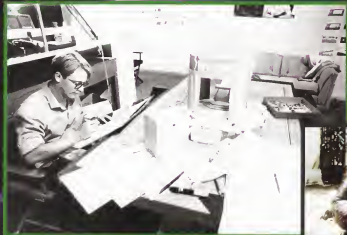
FM. A huge deal has been made about how a lot of the film was ad-libbed, and that Harold Ramis and Dan Aykroyd were sort of making stuff up as they went along. What kind of director did that make Ivan Reitman, from your experience? How do you think it affected his approach to the movie?

MG. It was no problem for Ivan. First of all, he had experience with Harold Ramis and Bill Murray—he directed *STRIPE*S. He knew Dan Aykroyd. These were all improv-trained writers and performers, so every time you worked with them, you knew that

there were words on paper—Harold was the best writer, he really knew how to write for Bill and make his jokes work—but that when you got to shooting, what's written down was just "good enough". Maybe the script plays out perfectly, and it's a done deal. But if you've got a camera and you've got the talent... if everyone knew the scene well enough, Ivan would just step in and say, what do you think, Harold? Can we try different reactions to this? He was also able to watch where their chemistry was going. You have to *feed* that, not fight it. It's what







While remembered for its great characters and hilarious story, the film displayed a wealth of practical effects, from Gozer's temple (LEFT) to stop motion and human controlled demon dogs (BELOW and OPPOSITE) to the classic "humans just out of frame" (BOTTOM).



made Ivan such a great comedic director—he knew what was funny, he knew how to make these guys funnier. The movie wasn't a free-for-all improvisation. There was improv now and then when it worked within the context. For example, the scene when Bill Murray enters Dana's apartment for the first time. When he stops and flicks up the piano, plays those little notes, and says "They hate this"—that's ad-libbed. But the rest of the scene is not, at all. Even for little things, like when they have to pile up into the car and leave city hall, and Bill Murray is pounding on the side going, "Let's go!"—Ivan made him do at least ten variations of "Let's go" just to get a funnier line. Something we actually cut from the film was



on the rooftop when you first see the Stay Puft man. Harold Ramis walked up to the edge, looked at it, and went "F--- me." We thought that was the funniest take of all, but we didn't want a ratings change, so we didn't use it. That kind of improvisation is very common in comedy. It was no more or less extreme in GHOSTBUSTERS.

As much as the guys acted like a comedy troupe, they were under strict direction from Ivan.

FM. Given that this was a crew of comedians, how did you handle the genuinely scary parts of the movie? The terror dogs are totally horrifying. I'm still

scared of them. How did you achieve the balance between the horror and comedy elements?

MG. Well, there are a couple levels to that. First of all, the film was not initially meant to be seen by children. We thought we had an adult comedy. The magic of it was very much like the magic of something like



**ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET THE WOLFMAN.** You have a scary moment, then break it with humor. That's the rhythm of what works, and your emotions go through a ride. It isn't any help to make the ghost funny—it's stronger to make him scary and then relieve that with comedic lines, because as a viewer, you enjoy the

release. You have to laugh off the fear. When we first screened it for a live audience, the studio had put a group together, and there were kids in the audience! There were quite a few. I'm talking eight year olds. We were like, what are you doing, bringing kids? This is not a kids' movie, they're all gonna scream and be scared. But the big shock

was that the kids screamed, and then when the guys came running out of the library, the kids laughed harder than anybody. They wanted that release, too, and we discovered that we had a family movie, which we had no idea of when we started. **FM.** You've talked a lot about budget cuts and deadlines. First of all, how did it come





about that you were under such a horrible deadline, and second of all, how would the final movie have changed if you did have more time?

**MG.** Ivan was at Columbia, and he'd already done *STRIPES*; which was a huge hit. We were in development on a number of other films. We had several projects, including an adaptations of *HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY*, but also one we called "Big Trouble". It had Bill Murray and John Candy, and they got scooped off to another planet, and there was a girlfriend embodied in a terror dog, and some other things. Harold Ramis had written it. So when Dan came around and said he had this idea, Ivan said, well, incorporate some of the stuff from "Big Trouble", and get Harold to help write it. We already had Bill Murray, so there was a package developing very quickly. Ivan went to Columbia with the idea—"Imagine *POLTERGEIST*, but the guys who come to the door to rescue you are Bill Murray and Harold Ramis"—and they said, sounds great, let's do it. Ivan, being a producer first, told them he'd get it done by the beginning of the summer and

that Columbia would "own the summer". To meet that deadline, we only had a year and change to do the movie. No special effects had been done; we didn't have an effects house... there wasn't even a place to go! We weren't underbudgeting, we were just on an impossible schedule. We did manage to deliver, and we did, in fact, own the summer. The deal was good for everybody.

In terms of how it affected things... think of the time it would take to conceive a terror dog, approve the terror dog, and storyboard the terror dog, without even having one built. Once we had the creature shop, we had to figure out which part of it would be stop motion, which part would be a guy in a suit, which part would be a huge puppet, how many variations we'd have to have, and how we could build them fast enough. Meanwhile, Ivan was having to shoot stuff without effects first. We couldn't shoot the physical stuff with the terror dogs until the end of the schedule because we couldn't have them done in time. We had to shoot opticals first and physicals last. It made us a little crazy. It broke continuity; it broke

the rhythm of some of the scenes because we were hounded by what we could do with special effects. They dragged down the comedy process. But had we had more time, we wouldn't have changed much about the dogs. It was one of those cases when the pressure to do something makes you arrive at the best solution. We had to rely on creativity, not extra time to add animation or sparkle effects. Of course, we didn't have CGI then.

**FM.** And now the terror dogs are iconic, like so much else of this movie. I'm going to list off some monsters, and if you can, give me some trivia about the design process for each one. First up, the library ghost.

**MG.** Plain and simple, we were a little concerned about how scary it could be, because it's right up front in the first scene. The tone of the whole movie had to be set by that one little scene. And you know how funny it is leading up to it—with the guys walking around, the hook stacking, and the slime on the card catalogs... it's a wonderful buildup to a simple "Boo!". Steve Johnson



No one knew that, with just a few minutes of screentime, the unnamed ghost who would come to be called "Slimer" would be one of the film's most memorable figures. Despite his diminutive nature, it took an entire team to spring him into action.





**From miniatures and molds to men-in-suits, stop-motion, and prosthetics, GHOSTBUSTERS utilized almost every practical FX trick in the book.**

worked on the transformation. It had to be cross-dissolved. It went through about three stages, with some animation thrown around as well. There was no time to go and design a really original looking ghost. We did have boards—some of them from Bernie Wrightson—that showed possible variations. But because it's a fast scene, and because there was no time, Steve just decided that the best way to do the ghost would be to take standing things we had, puppet props, and then dress them up so you couldn't recognize them from another movie, which is why it looks the way it does.

Oddly enough, if you watch *FRIGHT NIGHT*, the movie that Columbia made right after ours on a lower budget, you can see pieces of the library ghost. It's one of the things that gets burned up at the end with the vampires.

**FM.** Okay, how about Slimer. Who was apparently not even called Slimer during the movie. Didn't he get his name from the cartoon show?

**MG.** Yeah, he was always scripted as "Onionhead". We had concept art from a number of talented artists that showed him as literally an onion with arms and legs.

But just because a word goes into a script doesn't mean it's what you do, design-wise. It was a jumping off point. We did want something that would float around, so the shape of an onion wasn't a bad concept; and it just grew from that—we thought it would be better if he were hobby and more original. I said things like, look, he's got to have a rounded off bottom so a person's legs can come out and we can block it from the film, so it would be good if he didn't have a tail. A lot of it was function.

And no, he is not supposed to be the ghost of John Belushi. That's the big rumor that was started. I think what happened





was that we were sitting around talking to effects people, and they asked, what's this character like? Because they had to animate him. Is he actually scary; is he silly; is he aggressive? Who is he? I said, just think John Belushi in *ANIMAL HOUSE*. It wasn't because John was dead and this was supposed to be his ghost; it was just a way of referring to him as outrageous and sloppy.

And he didn't have a name, but it was developed for the cartoon show. He was called Slimer. It was a combination of Joe [Medjuck] and I, who produced the show, sitting down with head writer Joe Straczynski [aka J. Michael Straczynski, comic and television writer] and saying, okay, who are the characters? And since this was a theoretically Saturday morning cartoon, we took the opportunity to build a silly character who could offset the human beings—a sidekick, if you will. And in doing so, we had to give him a name.

**FM.** What about the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man? That's a man in a suit, right?

**MG.** Yes. The concept is in Danny's original "sales notes". He had the Ectomobile and he had Stay Puft. It was easy to do as a man in a suit. He even *walks* like a man in a suit. The bigger deal was putting him into the city convincingly, and then climbing the building. Technical work, mostly. It was nice that we could do such a great effect so late in the film, as opposed to petering out. Once we had finished the scene but hadn't done any screenings yet, I was walking across the lot with Ivan, and he went, "You know. This Stay Puft thing. Am I crazy? Is this the worst idea we've ever had?" We thought it was funny, but we didn't know if the audience would drop their jaws and go, *what the hell?* Then at the first screening, in that moment when you see his head through the buildings and then he turns the corner, the audience went crazy. I've never seen so much laughter in a movie theater in my whole life.

**FM.** Can you share your memories of Harold Ramis, given that he passed away earlier this year? It was a big blow to a lot of people and affected the horror community in a huge way.

**MG.** What you see on the screen is exactly what you get with Harold. He was a genuinely loveable guy. Very generous, very quiet. Very thoughtful. He turned into a great director. Our loss was just

that it was such a joy to know and work with him. We went all the way back to the 70s. We were part of the comedy scene in New York. When they all took off from *SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE* and moved on to Hollywood, Harold's message to me was basically, "Come on out, Mike. The weather's fine. Let's make movies." And making movies was what I had wanted to do since I was twelve years old, anyway.

**FM.** What's the story with the sequel? The movies are five years apart, so it's clear that a sequel was not immediately planned. What made you realize that another movie was viable?

**MG.** There was never much merchandising from the first movie because we were moving so quickly that companies weren't about to invest in toys for a movie whose longevity might be limited. They would rather invest in a children's program with guaranteed exposure for a certain amount of months. That would justify getting a toy line out, properly producing it, and sell it to

the audience. So there was no merchandise for the movie, but the studio said, hey, what about a Saturday morning cartoon? Syndication meant that there were loosey-goosey laws in the sense that we wouldn't have ideas rammed down our throat. So we had fun with the cartoon. There was no pressure. We made some money. And as time went on, the toy line based on *THE REAL GHOSTBUSTERS* came out, and we weren't the Power Rangers or anything, but we definitely became a toy phenomenon for kids.

I mean, no one sat down and thought about it hard. The toys were popular, the boys came together, the schedules looked okay, and we all spontaneously went, How about a sequel? It had been almost five years, but we jumped in. And the movie is good. It suffers from what most sequels suffer from, which is that nothing you see is new anymore, so you just have to do it based on character and story. There are some very good scenes, and it was wonderful what we could do with Rick



**OPPOSITE:** The big guy just wants a hug. **ABOVE:** Producer Michael C. Gross and Bill Murray between shots preparing to battle Zuul and her minions.





Moranis's character, and we created a funny villain. We never had an ending, and we knew that. We struggled, and thought, what can we do? We'll walk something big up the street again! Everyone was a little tired, really. Everyone except Sigourney, who was always a joy, and brought a lot of energy to the set.

**FM.** How do you think *GHOSTBUSTERS* has changed the landscape of film and movies in general? What do you think its legacy is?

**MG.** I don't think it's really changed or influenced cinema. When it was made and the toy line was taking off, people said that 20 or 25 years down the road, *GHOSTBUSTERS* would turn into that generation's *WIZARD OF OZ*. And that turned out to be true, in some ways. *WIZARD OF OZ* didn't, particularly change film, but it was a phenomenon, and we were a phenomenon. And you can't predict or project these things.

**FM.** There are people who bring their proton packs to Comic-Con every year, so it obviously has a generational cultural appeal.

**MG.** Sometimes I'm confused by it. I'm impressed, and I'm pleased. But who saw this coming? There are Ghostbusters groups all around the world. *Hundreds* of them. People make their own packs, do charity events—like Trekkies, but on a slightly smaller scale. But *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* developed so many characters, and there are so many ways to go. We've got one movie! Well, two, but there are no real character changes. We've got four guys and one set of backpacks and one car. It amazes me that the impact of the imagery has been so powerful that it exists with only a couple of characters. These guys will show up at hospitals and go into kids' wards. And kids may not always know the faces behind them, but they sure know the Ghostbusters. All of that is... I don't want to use the word shocked, but I'm certainly amazed, if nothing else, and very, very grateful. It's very nice to know that I worked on a film that makes the top hundred on a lot of people's lists. So I'm trying to do stuff for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary and give my last hurrah. If anything's going to be said by me, it's going to have to happen this year. I'm very ill. I only have a couple years. I've accepted it. I mean, I'm 68. I've had a good life. And how convenient that I get to see *GHOSTBUSTERS*' 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I'm trying to make the most of it.



YEARS  
OF BUSTIN'

**ERNIE HUDSON LOOKS BACK ON  
GHOSTBUSTERS**

INTERVIEW BY ANDREW HUDSON

*June 7, 2014 marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 1984's smash hit GHOSTBUSTERS, which has spawned cartoon spinoffs, a sequel, video games, and quite possibly even a third movie. Actor Ernie Hudson, most famously known as Ghostbuster Winston Zeddemore, shares his thoughts on the script, production, and legacy.*

**ON FIRST IMPRESSIONS**

I remember when I first got the script—I was with my two older sons, and I was living up in Laurel Canyon. I had been working in Hollywood for almost ten years trying to find a project that would really be worth doing.

I got the script and read it, and was just blown away. I loved the script. Loved the characters. I really didn't know Bill Murray or Dan Aykroyd's work because I wasn't a watcher of SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE, though I obviously knew who they were. I knew their names, but I wasn't that familiar with their work. But I loved the writing, and I loved the whole concept.



## ON REHEARSALS

We rehearsed for a number of weeks in New York. It was fun. Playing around with the script and the words. Me getting to know them, because they had already worked together on a number of projects over a number of years. It was very exciting. And whenever a movie gets to have rehearsal time, it's valuable time. I think it was about a three-week rehearsal period; I can't remember. But it was a decent period. That's why it was a shock to me when, just before we got ready to shoot, they completely changed the script. I wasn't really prepared for that because we had rehearsed and planned so much.



## ON SCRIPT CHANGES

The original Winston was much more involved in the franchise. I think [he was] an equal, in the sense that when they left the university in the very beginning and they set up the company, Winston came right in. And so he was with them in all those adventures in the hotel when the ghost slimed. In fact, I think the ghost actually slimed Winston. He also had a military background that was pretty extensive. I think he was a major in the airforce, a demolitions expert. So they had a lot of history of who this guy was and what he brought to the team.

Just before we started shooting, they gave me a rewrite to the script. All of that was gone, including his background. It was just sort of, "I'm looking for a job" and "if there's a steady paycheck, I'll believe in anything you say." Which is a funny beat for a moment, but as an actor it makes it difficult to hang a character on, because so much of what the audience knows about you is in that introduction. The character's history was sort of taken away. It was just more difficult coming into the group after they were well established as the GHOSTBUSTERS. That was disappointing.



## ON INPUT AND IMPROVISATION

Certainly, everything was scripted. A lot of people thought the whole movie was improvised, but it wasn't. We had rehearsal time.

Ivan and the guys were always open to any new ideas. We'd shoot what was written, but then we'd try different things and if someone had a funnier line, they'd go with the funnier line. So a lot of it was in the moment, which I think always helps a movie. But we did have a script, and we did stay relatively close to it.

The great thing about working with Ivan Reitman is that he's always looking for what's funnier, what works; and everybody had input. It was nice being a part of that process because it doesn't happen a lot in movies.



## ON IVAN REITMAN AND SPACEHUNTER

This was different [from *SPACEHUNTER: ADVENTURES IN THE FORBIDDEN ZONE*] because in *GHOSTBUSTERS*, Harold Ramis and Danny Aykroyd wrote the script. Danny created the ideas, from my understanding, and Ivan had worked very closely with this improv comedy group of guys, done several movies, like *MEATBALLS*, and produced a lot of their stuff. So it was kind of an in-house thing.

The movie I did, *SPACEHUNTER*, came out as "Adventures in the Creep Zone". It was written, produced, and directed by a Canadian named Jean LaFleur. Columbia was producing it, and about two weeks into production [LaFleur] was fired. They brought in Lamont Johnson to direct. Ivan came in as executive producer and brought in his team of writers, of which Harold Ramis was a part, and reworked the script. That was starring Peter Strauss, Molly Ringwald, myself, and Michael Ironside. It was kind of them taking over someone else's project. So it was a very different experience than something that they had collaborated on and created.

## ON HAROLD RAMIS, DAN AKROYD, AND BILL MURRAY

First off, they had worked together for a number of years. They had a great repartee. It was almost like family, and all that comes with that. I was sort of an outsider. I didn't come from improvisational theater. I just came from traditional theater, so I have a different process from them.

Harold Ramis especially became a good friend. He sort of, I suppose, took me under his arm. He was the go-to guy whenever things got totally crazy or confusing or whatever. Harold was always the one to say to me, "Don't worry about it."

And Bill is just a great guy. I love Bill Murray. I love his spirit. Very kind, very considerate, and very loyal. And even now after all these years with all the talk about a *GHOSTBUSTERS III*, Bill is the only guy who stepped up and said, "I won't even consider it if Ernie is not involved." When we did the video game, the first thing he asked [was], "Is everyone going to be involved, including Ernie?" That kind of loyalty is rare in Hollywood, and I just have so much love and appreciation for him; [as well as] admiration because he's a genius in terms of what he does.



Danny is just a good dude. I worked with his wife Donna Dixon before I met Danny. We did *BOSOM BUDDIES* together. She's a beautiful lady, and I consider her a friend. And Danny is just a down-to-Earth good guy.

So the guys were great and were very inclusive, which is unusual when you work on a lot of big films. I've worked with a lot of the so-called "stars", and they do their thing, but it's hard to get included. The guys in *GHOSTBUSTERS* were very inclusive and always made me feel like part of the team. Even though I felt in some ways the studio sort of isolated the Winston character, I never felt any of that from the guys. They made it clear that he was very much a part of the team.

## ON LESSONS LEARNED

I think [I learned] some fun improvisational stuff. Learning how to just sort of relax and go with the flow, kind of be in the moment. How to conduct yourself on set.

It was interesting watching them and learning how to play off other people. In theater, you come with what you have to offer, and everybody shows up with a part in hand, and everybody does that part. But I think on a movie like *GHOSTBUSTERS*, you had to be prepared with your stuff, but you also had to be prepared to go in any direction at any given time. It was fun to work that way.



## ON SPECIAL EFFECTS

It was cutting edge for the time. Now we look at it and they can do so much. If there is a *GHOSTBUSTERS III*, I'll be curious to see what they can do. But the effects were pretty cutting edge at the time.

You had to imagine. They had a little model of the Marshmallow Man. Ivan's directing a scene and he says, "The Marshmallow Man is sixty feet tall and he's going to look like this." But you can't imagine what Slimer's gogina look like until you see the movie, even if you're acting in it. You have an idea, but once you see it all put together, it's a whole different ride. And for me that's great, because when I see the movie that I'm in, it's almost like I'm experiencing it for the first time; even though I was a part of those scenes. But once all the people have done their job—the editors, the special effects people, the sound people, the musicians—it takes on a whole other life.

I had no idea what *GHOSTBUSTERS* would look like. It's something you just can't imagine until you see what the special effects people do, they just do extraordinary work. The god coming into the movie and the dogs and the skies darkening, all that stuff is pretty impressive; and I discovered it for the first time watching the movie.

*GHOSTBUSTERS II* was a similar experience, although by then I did have an idea. But the train that runs me over in the subway—I had, in my mind, a whole different train. It's always different than what you imagined, but that's always fun; because there are so many people who touch a movie and have input.



## ON NEW YORK

For me, it was the first movie I ever shot in New York. I had worked in New York on a number of projects, but *GHOSTBUSTERS* was the first movie. The crowds hung around trying to watch, even in the cold weather (because we were shooting in November/December in New York, and it got cold a few times). We blocked crosstown traffic in Central Park, and the Ectomobile kept breaking down. But it was a lot of fun. [I was working] in New York and being there for two months, almost three if you count rehearsal time. So it was a very different experience living there, as opposed to visiting. I had visited for a week at a time, a few days. But going there for several months, working on a big film [was different]. It was all very exciting. This was a big project that the studios were excited about. The fans were excited. They did an amazing promotion with the no-ghosts symbol. Nobody knew what it meant, but they had gotten it out... you could feel that energy in the air. New York has an energy, a life throb, a pulse that's different than any place I've ever been.

## IN THE SUCCESS

The premiere was pretty extraordinary. It was in New York. Fans loved the movie; they went crazy. It was happening, it was very exciting.

When you have that kind of success in a city like New York, it's like the whole city opens up to you. I think as an actor, you really feel like you're an actor when you're in big budget stuff. When you feel like you're a part of this machine, this Hollywood thing.

It kicked off that summer. It was like a never-ending party. It just kept going, week after week. It was number one at the box office [and] it was a great ride.



## IN GHOSTBUSTERS' LEGACY

When I met Danny and Bill and Harold and Ivan, I knew the movie was going to be successful. I just couldn't imagine the rapport, the way people played off each other. I knew it would be a hit. I had no idea [that] it would be a hit that would sustain itself for thirty years. I had no idea that I'd be signing autographs and walking up the street and people continually yelling "Who you gonna call?!" thirty years after the film.

I had done a lot of movies that studios get excited about, and everybody thinks it's gonna be the next great thing, and then it doesn't perform. And there are a few movies I've done where people expected nothing from but actually performed. **THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE** was a film that I didn't think would find an audience, and it did. So you can never tell.

But **GHOSTBUSTERS** was a phenomenon in the summer of 1984. I think the film had and still has this appeal to people of every age. Little kids love **GHOSTBUSTERS**, old people love **GHOSTBUSTERS**. It's hard to find anybody who didn't like the movie. It was one of those rare things. It just hit every demographic, and I think that what makes it sustain. I see kids who grew up watching the movie who are now in their thirties/forties, and they're now introducing their children. There's a whole new generation who love the movie. It's pretty extraordinary.

## IN GHOSTBUSTERS III

They've been talking about **GHOSTBUSTERS III** ever since the second one, and that was twenty-five years ago. So fans have been wanting it to happen, [and] I'd love to see it happen. I don't know why it's taken so long. The second movie took five years, and I thought that was a long time! I've talked to all the guys over the years, Sigourney included, and everybody says they want it to happen. But some how it just hasn't happened.

I think it will. I think there will be a **GHOSTBUSTERS III**. I'd like to see Winston included. I know they'll probably bring in some newer people, but I'd love to see Winston [be] a link between the old and the new.

I think people are inspired by the movie. Wherever I travel in the world, there are **GHOSTBUSTERS** fans who build their suits, their backpacks, convert their cars into Ectomobiles, [and] are waiting for the next installment.

So I think, for their sake, it would be great to happen. I just don't know why it's taken so long. I know that when I did a movie called **AIRHEADS** with Harold Ramis, we talked about it, and that was twenty years ago. He wanted the movie to happen. I wish it had happened before he passed away, but it will happen when it happens. I hope I'm still around to do it.







**MORE LIKE A GAME SHOW HOST:**

# GHOSTBUSTERS AND THE HORROR COMEDY

by Alexandra West

**F**or those that grew up in the 80s, the phenomenon of Ivan Reitman's 1984 classic *GHOSTBUSTERS* was inescapable. From its initial release to Ray Parker Jr.'s theme song to the sequel to the animated television series, it was an omnipresent force among many young lives. It entered the mainstream and combined amazing practical special effects with the unstoppable comic trifecta of Bill Murray, Harold Ramis, and Dan Aykroyd. While horror comedies, particularly ghost-based ones, have been present throughout film history, *GHOSTBUSTERS* was the first to marry effects, mythology, and unique comedic chemistry to create an unstoppable cultural force—one that all other horror comedies would have to pay tribute to.

The horror comedies that predated *GHOSTBUSTERS* were studio ventures that piggy-backed on the success of true horror films. Films like *THE GHOST BREAKERS* (1940) starring Bob Hope, Abbott and Costello's *HOLD THAT GHOST* (1941), and *THE GHOST AND MR. CHICKEN* (1966) were immensely successful with critics and audiences alike but often ripped off elements of Universal and Hammer horror films. "Those kinds of comedies, which were the precursors to *GHOSTBUSTERS*, barely functioned as movies," says Michael Phillips, critic for the *Chicago Tribune*. "You always

have to figure out how much straight-faced mumbo-jumbo you're going to put into a movie like this, and there is a lot of it in *GHOSTBUSTERS*."

*GHOSTBUSTERS* was originally conceived by Dan Aykroyd—whose interest in spooks and spectres would eventually lead him to becoming a celebrity expert in the subject—as a high concept time-travelling adventure. When Aykroyd showed his initial script to director Ivan Reitman, the director liked the premise but was skeptical about budgetary constraints. In the spring of 1982, Aykroyd and Harold Ramis overhauled the script, setting it in contemporary New York City and giving the film a decidedly working-class aesthetic. In both *GHOSTBUSTERS* and *GHOSTBUSTERS 2*, New York City became a character unto itself, the supernatural elements seeping into a contemporary society known for its attitude offered a lack of reverence for the ghosts. They were just another thing New Yorkers had to deal with. "[*GHOSTBUSTERS*] came at a point in '84 when New York hadn't been cleaned up, and it had only been a few years since *TAXI DRIVER* in '76," remembers Phillips. "And the premise of the sequel being that all the malignant energy from New Yorkers was causing the problems—you could totally believe that back then. I, frankly, don't ever want to see a third movie, [but if they make

it] you'd want to see ghosts absolutely trashed in 42nd Street, which is horrendous now. *GHOSTBUSTERS* is an interesting documentary of a particular time in New York City."

Filmmaker Anthony Bueno, who is currently putting the finishing touches on the documentary *CLEANIN' UP THE TOWN: REMEMBERING GHOSTBUSTERS*, remembers the initial impact of the film on him: "It was that film that people's parents took them to see; it was part of their escapism. For me, I just loved it. *GHOSTBUSTERS* has such a unique feel, partially due to New York and partially due to where everyone who worked on it was in their careers, in front or behind the cameras. These days, whenever a film is released, it's under the eyes of the world, and the internet will be bashing away at it. [*GHOSTBUSTERS*] was made away from all of that. They could make any film they wanted to because it wasn't hindered by thinking that kids were going to watch it. It could be what it was supposed to be without any interference, and that's why *GHOSTBUSTERS* will always remain unique."

Upon its release, *GHOSTBUSTERS* became a cultural phenomenon and a defining moment in popular films. It was a big budget comedy with horror elements—just ask any young child who's seen the



opening library scare—that was shaped and made by the personas within it.

"The thing about *GHOSTBUSTERS* is that the effects were pretty elaborate for that kind of comedy, and it was not a cheap movie to make," explains Phillips. "At the time, I remember thinking, it's a little big for me. Too many special effects and not enough banter. But if you look at the scene with the huge Stay Puff Marshmallow Man, it becomes obvious that the film never loses its sense of humor, even in the big scenes. I think what you learn from *GHOSTBUSTERS* is that if you have a big special effects comedy, you need performers who can fight back a little. Otherwise all you have is generic."

One of the things *GHOSTBUSTERS* achieved was the cementation of the curmudgeon persona that Billy Murray would go on to make a career out of. Murray's timing and attitude was an easy reflection of the disenfranchised feeling of the 80s. The fact that Peter Venkman emerges as the leader/hero of the piece only makes the audience root harder. "It's not that different from the way Bob Hope would turn to the camera with a kind of *Do you believe this?* expression," says Phillips. "Audiences like that, but you have to do it just so. Murray doesn't look to the camera; it's not like he's undermining the movie and checking out. His whole thing is about ridiculous under-reaction to serious

events. Even the way he yells when Slimer is flying down the hotel hallway at him, he's only kind of half committing to it, but it's hilarious."

"They were all at the right time in their careers," explains Bueno. "They'd all worked well separately, but bringing them together brought out that insane energy that Dan Aykroyd has—especially in the original script, which was just mad—along with Bill Murray, who's just a gritty and grounded person. Dan's script didn't really have a lot of identity for each character, so they could write each of the characters for the actors, make Venkman a lot more like Murray and Egon a lot more like Harold. It's not dumbed down; they found their feet with this, and they hadn't become mega-famous yet and certainly the film hadn't become this explosion into what it eventually became. They didn't have producers looking over their shoulder. They could just make the film they wanted to make. I wouldn't say it was their

respective peaks, but they did manage to pull something off with *GHOSTBUSTERS* that got them a lot of respect."

"I didn't review it at the time, but I was writing reviews for the *Twin Cities* weekly city pages, and the other [critic] pulled the *GHOSTBUSTERS* card," remembers Phillips. "You couldn't escape it that year—if you weren't seeing the movie, you were being bombarded by that song. What I mainly remember is that those three and Ernie Hudson, though he never got enough to do in the first one, is that they were magically well cast, perfectly balanced. Murray, Aykroyd, and Ramis; they're all working on different wavelengths, but feeding into the same larger wavelength."

The cultural impact of *GHOSTBUSTERS* cannot be understated. Its unique grittiness,



**OPPOSITE: *GHOSTBUSTERS* set a bar for horror comedies that inspired such classics as *CABIN IN THE WOODS*, *SHAUN OF THE DEAD*, and *EVIL DEAD 2*.**

mixed with humor, cultural commentary, and a big heart at the middle was a milestone in the culture of the 80s. The utilization of mythology kept horror and genre fans interested while the detailed special effects still managed some disturbing and twisted scenes. But at its core it was about the team and their friendship—a friendship so genuine the audience felt like they were in on the jokes with them.

The emergence of the personas of the actors in *GHOSTBUSTERS*, particularly Murray's, helped pave the way for others to follow suit. In the 1987 sequel/reboot/remake *EVIL DEAD 2: DEAD BY DAWN*, Bruce Campbell's Ash went from sensitive friend to hyper-masculinized, wise-cracking, chainsaw-wielding joker. It was a performance that helped cement Raimi and Campbell as icons of contemporary horror because of a solid, accessible, truthful performance (with a lot of laughs) in the middle of an effects-driven demonic possession movie. This persona would be further articulated in their follow-up film *ARMY OF DARKNESS*, when Ash's sarcastic anti-hero became one of the most quotable horror characters in film.

Throughout this time, horror franchises also had to make choices between staying with their stoic dark roots (i.e. *HELLRAISER*) or embracing the sheer insanity of their internal logic. The most iconic performance out of these films would have to be Robert Englund as Freddy Krueger. Freddy famously began as a near-silent killer, but eventually morphed into a monologuing comedian who wound up becoming more popular than the characters the audiences were supposed to root for. The *NIGHTMARE* on *ELM STREET*

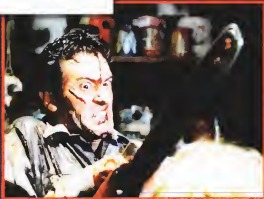
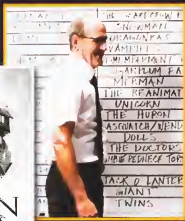
franchise was built from excess—from special effects to bizarre plot lines—but they needed Englund not-so-subtly embracing his hamminess and at times literally winking at the camera.

Films like Edgar Wright's *SHAUN OF THE DEAD* (2004) utilized both Simon Pegg and Nick Frost's real life friendship and chemistry to create one of the more recent iconic horror comedies. Wright, Pegg, and Frost (all coming off the television show *SPACED*) were able to play off the natural instincts of the creative team with a film made well away from the glare of Hollywood. They successfully created a unique movie which, like *GHOSTBUSTERS*, merged cliché scares with humor, heart, and genre. It satisfied fans and helped reignite the zombie sub-genre.

More recently, Joss Whedon and Drew Goddard's *CABIN IN THE WOODS* (2012) caught horror and film fans by surprise by combining deeply thought-out genre tropes with Whedon's iconic tongue-in-cheek humor. While the film focuses on two separate storylines, of college students going to the titular cabin to get away from

have talked about how the characters are an extension of themselves and their roles as writer/producer/director. *CABIN IN THE WOODS* functions as a love letter to the genre as well as a criticism of it, which has helped propel it to one of the most talked about horror films in the last five years.

Although technically correct, it seems almost wrong to write "Ivan Reitman's *GHOSTBUSTERS*". It should be Ivan Reitman, Dan Aykroyd, Bill Murray, and Harold Ramis's *GHOSTBUSTERS*. Without the unique humour, charm, and craft that each creator brought to their film, it would not be what it has become. It would not have helped elevate the comedy ghost story into a financially viable investment for studios. And it would certainly not be one of the most quoted, most loved, and most laughed with films of the last thirty years.



OFFICIAL WINNERS

FAMOUS  
**MONSTERS**  
FILM FESTIVAL

2014

Before Forry said his final goodbye to us, he had a few ideas for taking the magazine to another level and embracing its future. While many think of *Famous Monsters* as a magazine purely dedicated to classic monsters, Forry insisted that we build the next generation of storytellers." He referenced how he featured an unknown actor, Vincent Price, who made monster makeups in his parents' house. Or a young filmmaker named John Landis. Forry always had the eye for talent, the talent to keep in with that tradition. FM this year held the Famous Monsters Film Fest at the Big World Event Center in Los Angeles, CA. On the weekend of May 17th and 18th, filmmakers and screenwriters from all over the world journeyed to the SoCal location to display their latest creations. Our fest attracted some of the finest independent horror, Sci-Fi, and fantasy films, live-action films, and animation. On display was a wonderful collection of monsters and practical effects, a variety of animation, and live-action animation (including some stop-mo). It was the best group of talent we've ever had at one of our Festivals and we are honored to present to you the following winners in their respective categories.

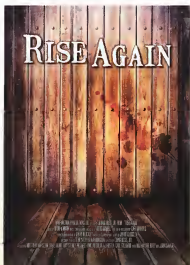
BEST FEATURE: HORROR

RISE AGAIN

DIRECTOR: Craig Ross, Jr. - WRITER AND PRODUCER: Jerry Quickley - Executive Producer: Christopher Harrington - CAST: Matthew Marsden, Caleb Hunt, John Savage, Elizabeth McLaughlin, Ray Stoney, and Nathanyael Grey

RISE AGAIN is a beautiful film—shot on location in Natchez, Mississippi—featuring some of the most powerful performances in the entire festival. The story centers around two brothers returning home after the close of the Civil War. After becoming afflicted with a condition akin to vampirism, they use their newly found powers to fight against wealthy southern landowners and their army of flesh eating ghouls who are determined to keep their former slaves in captivity to serve as cheap labor and a food source.

Writer/Producer Jerry Quickley: "It tackles some heavy issues while cross-breeding two different monster genres (vampires and ghouls), which is one of the strengths of genre film, you can put heavy subjects in a new light by including supernatural and fantastic elements. At its core, *Rise Again* came from what I frequently saw and observed—working as a journalist—among soldiers in war zones. They all want to go home at some point, but the home most of them long for—especially combat vets and first time combat vets in particular—is gone forever. The home they want to return to is the person they were before being exposed to the virus of war, but that pre-war / untouched person doesn't exist anymore."



## BEST FEATURE: SCI-FI/FANTASY HEAVEN IS HELL

**DIRECTORS:** Chris Sato & Mike Meyer **WRITER:** Mike Meyer **PRODUCER:** Chris Sato **ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS:** Mike Meyer & Jenn Walsh **PRIMARY CAST:** Lindsey Marks (Faith), Christopher Marcom (Judah), Ethan Henry (Zerach), Mark ViaFranco (Jesus), David Bertucci (Thomas), Tierza Scaccia (Junia), Steve Rasmussen (Noah), David Morse (God), Jack Schultz (Lucifer)

A recently deceased woman awakens in Heaven to discover that war has broken out. She teams with a small group of Apostles in a battle against the evil archangel Zerach to return Jesus to the throne of heaven. Filled with action, one-liners, practical makeup, martial arts, and lots of explosions, **HEAVEN IS HELL** is a crowd-pleaser of the highest order and makes the most of its unique and often unpredictable concept that director Chris Sato affectionately refers to as "John Carpenter's The Bible".

**Director Chris Sato:** "My rule of thumb for effects in film prompts a simple question – WWJD (What Would John Woo Do)? I'll tell you what he'd do – he would put real blanks in real guns, use real explosions, heavy squibs and make the world as real as possible for the actors that inhabit them and the audience that needs to believe in it. After all, a head made out of gelatin that's been painted by hand for a week and painstakingly had individual hairs pinned into it will always look better when it blows up than anything a giant number cruncher can create."

**Director Mike Meyer, on actor Jack Schultz who played Lucifer and tragically passed away several months after production wrapped, never having seen the final film:** "When I'd met Jack about 10 years ago and started doing work for his theatre in Aurora, IL, I knew I wanted to work with him. He mostly wrote and directed shows, but whenever I'd see him act, it was fantastic. He never pushed. He never mishandled a moment. He's one of those unique actors whose characters just effortlessly fall out of him. I didn't peg him instantly as Lucifer, but once you see him deliver a line and he flashes his gap-toothed smile, the discussion you just jump up and down and say "That's a guy who would spend all of his time playing pranks on humanity. Jack was definitely taken too early and is greatly missed. One of the great things about releasing this movie with the world is getting to share his gifts with the world."



## BEST FEATURE FILM: FOREIGN THROWBACK

**PRODUCERS:** Travis Bain and Anthony Ring **DIRECTOR & WRITER:** Travis Bain **CAST:** Shawn Brack, Anthony Ring, Melanie Serafin, Vernon Wells, Warren Clements, Andy Bramble.

**THROWBACK**, shot on location in Australia, is the tale of a treasure hunt gone wrong as a mysterious beast stalks our adventurers. The film features a wonderful classic sensibility in its approach to the monster and has wonderful performances, including a memorable appearance by Vernon Wells (**THE ROAD WARRIOR**, **COMMANDO**).

**Writer/Director Travis Bain:** "THROWBACK was inspired by a wide range of different films, ranging from Val Lewton's RKO chillers to Hitchcock's **THE BIRDS** to **PREDATOR** to Indiana Jones to the '70s bigfoot films **THE LEGEND OF BOGGY CREEK** and **CREATURE FROM BLACK LAKE**. The storyline was modelled on classic psychological westerns like **THE NAKED SPUR** and **TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE**, so it's not only a rollicking creature feature but also a cautionary tale about obsessions and how they can destroy us. We filmed Vernon Wells' scenes in a very striking location, but we had to trek quite a distance to get there, and Vernon's military sniper outfit got snagged on every prickly and thorn within a twenty-foot radius. Vernon likes to joke that we made him walk over "three mountains" that day, but it was actually just our special fitness service that we offer to all of our talent free of charge. Better than any Beverly Hills Pilates class. No one can say we don't care about the health of our actors! Our next project is an apocalyptic outbreak sci-fi/horror feature inspired by H.P. Lovecraft. There have been very few satisfying Lovecraft films over the years, so we're determined to give Cthulhu Mythos fans all the alien abominations and cosmic dread they've been hankering for." <http://www.travisbain.com.au/throwback.htm>



NO ONE IS SAFE FROM  
THIS BLOODTHIRSTY  
MONSTER!



## FORREST J ACKERMAN FILM AWARD: THE GIANT SPIDER

PRODUCERS: Christopher R. Mihm & Stephanie Mihm · WRITER & DIRECTOR: Christopher R. Mihm · CAST: Daniel R. Sjerwen, Shannon McDonough, Mike Cook, James Nargard, Billie Jo Konze and Mark Hoider.

An homage to classic monster films of the 50s atomic era, THE GIANT SPIDER is a lovingly created film about, what else, a giant spider that threatens a small town. Intrepid reporters and the military fight to save the town from this menace. The film is presented as if it was created in the 1950s, but features a bit of parody of the era that makes for an incredibly entertaining

treat. Truly worthy of the Forrest J Ackerman Film Award for being fun, imaginative, and created in the best traditions of the monster classics.

**Writer/Director Christopher Mihm:** "I was introduced to the amazing films of the 'drive-in era' by my late father when, during the heyday of the VCR, we would rent those old classics and watch them together. Experiencing these films with my dad and bonding over them greatly influenced my love of 'cheesy old movies'. For more information about my films or to order copies, please visit my website at [sainteuphoria.com](http://sainteuphoria.com)!"



## BEST SHORT: ANIMATION THE SETBACK

PRODUCERS: Lon Lopez and Rob Wilson · Writer, Director, and Editor: Lon Lopez

A stop-motion animation short about a secret weapon (think Steve Austin, The Six Million Dollar Man) who overthrows a plot by evil oil barons to menace a town in order to build a pipeline. Filled with quick-witted humor, over-the-top action, and a playful style that makes for one of the most purely entertaining films we watched, THE SETBACK is proof that sometimes the old ways are still the best ways.

**Writer/Director Lon Lopez:** "I had met THE SETBACK co-producer Rob Wilson at the comic book shop where I was shooting a web series and I came to find out we shared a love of collecting action figures, particularly G.I. Joes. As we started hanging out more and as a way to display our collections, we began building dioramas out of wood and found materials. Now faced with some pretty detailed dioramas and a ridiculous stash of figures collected through the years, we almost needed a reason to put this stuff to good use. I had never made a stop motion movie before and some of the scenes from the short were just test shots to see if we could pull it off. But once we got a couple scenes completed and we realized we could do it, I came up with a story and we just went for it. In this era of CG, we chose stop motion mostly because as grown men, it gave us a good excuse to play with our toys. Rob and I are just about done with principal photography of Chap. 2 and then we go into post for about a month. Chap 2 is not a direct sequel but it's connected and it's crazy with action. Hopefully you'll like it and be on board for the whole saga. Till then people can follow us at our site [www.ThanksButNoThanksProductions.com](http://www.ThanksButNoThanksProductions.com)."



## BEST SHORT: HORROR EDWARD THE DAMNED

PRODUCERS: John L. Weckworth & Kristin Weckworth · DIRECTOR: John L. Weckworth · Writer: John L. Weckworth · CAST: Oliver Hollis as Edward Mordrake, Rachel Warren as Cindy East / the Demon Face, David Lyddan as The Doctor

A short film that genuinely gave chills to not only the film fest audiences, but also the judges. Weckworth adapts the real life story of Edward Mordrake—a man thought to be cursed by his unique medical condition—into a modern horror short that retains all the mystery and suspense of the original. A wonderfully constructed film that will not easily be forgotten as it relies on subtlety and pacing to build tension.

**Producer/Director/Writer John L. Weckworth:** "The story of Edward Mordrake is riddled with holes and that lent itself to expanding upon and updating the tale for a modern audience. I was initially drawn to the high strangeness of the whole concept and I knew it would make for some unsettling and striking imaginary. I wrote Edward the Damned with the intention of directing it myself from the get go. I crafted the screenplay to play to my strengths but also to cover new ground and experiment. Most of all I wanted to tell a great story. The story isn't a standard three act structure or a hero's journey, it's more of an unfolding. With each scene the audience gets teased with a little more information building to an unforgettable climax." <http://www.edwardthedamned.com/>



## BEST FX MAKEUP: THE FAY

**DIRECTOR:** Mark Bonocore **PRODUCERS:** Mark Bonocore, Leon Sanginito **ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS:** Matthew Haas, Gerardo Puga, David Deneen **STORY BY:** Mark Bonocore **DIRECTORS OF PHOTOGRAPHY:** Gerardo Puga, Leon Sanginito **STARRING:** Sarah von Ock (the Fay); Tyler Oakey (the Knight); Veronica Lane (the Lady) **FX TEAM:** Mark Bonocore (Character/Production Designer); David Deneen (Creator of Special Makeup FX); Jamie Leigh Mattucci; Michael Harvey; Nicole Pym; Samantha Adde; Andrea Gilefi; Brenda DiGiovanna (Assistant Makeup FX); Melissa Diaz (Costume Designer); Leon Sanginito (VFX Supervisor).

A gorgeously shot fantasy about a lost knight rescued from battle by beautiful forest creature, *THE FAY* features an almost silent story with a narrative told almost exclusively through the visuals. While it's lush wooded locations and photography provide plenty of eye candy, it is the practical makeup for the various creatures that populate the forest that make the film stand out. Carefully crafted and expertly designed, these costumes are on par with the biggest budget Hollywood features.

**Producer Leon Sanginito:** "Our decision to rely on practical makeup effects was driven by two things: The organic look that we wanted the entire film to have (we wanted to rely on rich cinematography and to make *THE FAY* look like a pre-Raphaelite painting), and the fact that we (especially our director Mark Bonocore) are all somewhat prejudiced against CGI, which we think is over-used. Almost everyone involved in the production of *THE FAY*, most especially our chief makeup effects artist David Deneen, is highly influenced by the work of Jack Pierce on the classic Universal monster films, as well as that of Dick Smith, John Chambers, Tom Savini, Rick Baker, and Rob Bottin—all of whom we of course first encountered in the pages of *Famous Monsters* when we were kids. David, as well as director Mark Bonocore and DP Leon Sanginito, are also lifelong disciples of the late great Ray Harryhausen; and, if you look carefully, you will even see his influence in *THE FAY*" [www.thefaymovie.com](http://www.thefaymovie.com)



## HONORABLE MENTION: ERIK: PORTRAIT OF A LIVING CORPSE

**WRITER/DIRECTOR:** Ryan Bijan **PRODUCER:** Maria Consuelo Jeri **Starring:** Autumn Hyon, Ryan Bijan, Matthew Brett Han, Amelia Galindo, Thomas Reeves, Robert Lee Perrin **Adapted from:** The Phantom of the Opera by Gaston Leroux

Ryan Bijan digs into Leroux's *PHANTOM OF THE OPERA* to find the story left untold in the musical. One of the most faithful adaptations to date, Bijan's love of the source material is apparent as *ERIK* is shot with great care and affection. A bit surrealistic at times, Bijan looks to find the humanity in one of cinema's most classic monsters.

**Writer/Director Ryan Bijan:** "Out of all the classic literary monsters, Erik was the most human. He wasn't supernatural or scientifically created. He's an incredibly brilliant artist and musician, but his deformity, and being not all there mentally make him an incredibly sympathetic and tragic figure. I grew up with the classic Universal and Hammer Horror films. Claude Rains and Lon Chaney were my first Phantoms, so I knew him as a figure of horror, imagine my surprise when I realized most people only know the Phantom as a very romantic and sexual icon. As much as I love the Andrew Lloyd Webber show, and I do, it's given people a skewed understanding of Gaston Leroux's character. And as much as I love all the various adaptations, the original novel has been an untapped resource since 1925. I wanted to go back to the roots of the story and explore his psychology and childhood." <http://www.bigjohncreations.com/>



## HONORABLE MENTION: DOCTOR MABUSE: ETIOPOMAR

**WRITER/DIRECTOR:** Ansel Faraj **PRODUCERS:** Ansel Faraj, Raza Taylor-Faraj **ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS:** Derek Molraaten, Ravie Zelden **CAST:** Jerry Lacy, Nathan Wilson, Kathryn Leigh Scott, Lara Parker, Christopher Pennock, Dane Corrigan, Koto Avery, Bahria Garrigan, Annie Warman, John C. Smith, Kelsey Hewitt, Douglas Eames, Kelly Erin Becker, Elyse Ashton, Thomas Adaji **Music by:** Bill Wondel

Based on the Mabuse character made popular by the films of Fritz Lang, Faraj looks to put his own spin on the story. *ETIOPOMAR* is the second in Faraj's *MABUSE* series and stars some of horror's favorite names, including *DARK SHADOWS* alum Kathryn Leigh Scott and Lara Parker.

**Writer/Director Ansel Faraj:** "Dr. Mabuse is a German criminal mastermind created by writer Norbert Jacques in 1921, he's a hypnotist, a master of disguise, a magician and the subject of three Fritz Lang films. He inspired Keyser Soze in *THE USUAL SUSPECTS* and was an influence on Chris Nolan's Joker in *THE DARK KNIGHT*. As a teenager I saw Lang's *TESTAMENT OF DR. MABUSE* and was really fascinated by the character, here was this guy that could basically do anything he set his mind to, he's the puppet master pulling everyone's strings, and all that appealed to me at 14 years old. I knew I wanted to do something about him, I went and did my research on the character, sort of took him apart and reassembled him using what I liked about Jacques's original villain, and then threw in my own ideas about this megalomaniac and his world." <http://www.doctormabuse-themovie.com/>

**BEST SCREENPLAY**  
**NEON AZTECS** by John Leary

NEON AZTECS, in the tradition of good storytelling, does not explain its every twist. It is a sharp, witty, and eventually terrifying psychological thriller that throws us into the midst of an investigation of revenge killings ordered by a psychic meth dealer. The drug-induced, nightmarish visions that follow are the catalyst for action sequences that rival Hong Kong's best and most disturbing.

**John Leary:** "The summer I turned seventeen, the local TV stations ran CITIZEN KANE and NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, and I caught them both within weeks of each other. I was held by their power, and despite the differences in genre and period, I recognized that they not only broke from the conventions of their respective genres, but obliterated them. I look at other genres and apply them to horror/thriller/suspense scripts. Woody Allen and forties screwball comedies are models for delivery and timing that I constantly find myself referring back to. Other films and scripts I go back to are NIGHT STALKER, THE BIRDS, ROSEMARY'S BABY, ALIEN, SILENCE OF THE LAMBS, JAWS, and the original INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS. Horror films that transcend convention. The unseen monster is always scariest to me."

**BEST SCREENPLAY: HORROR**  
**THE DEVIL'S HAMMER** by Craig Walendziak

The best horror balances gross-outs and gore with terrifying moments, and in that sense, THE DEVIL'S HAMMER is a masterpiece. It is genuinely scary, exciting, cringe-worthily disgusting, and full of moments that might seem cliché in the hands of other writers but succeeded well enough to keep us turning the pages. Who needs teenagers in the woods running from a maniac when you can have a biker gang held captive by disease-worshipping cultists? We even ended up rooting for the biker gang, which is a true mark of quality seeing as in crappy movies, we always root for the monster.

**Craig Walendziak:** "As a kid, I remember sneaking into PHANTASM II and being absolutely terrified of the Tall Man. I knew then and there that I wanted to write horror films. The 'theme' of THE DEVIL'S HAMMER is decay—be it in religion, community, or authority. To that end, I wanted to make the disease as visually gut wrenching as possible. I wanted to give the reader nightmares. The 'real scare' is the disease. It's a primal fear. The trick was finding a way to spread the disease in a fresh way—and that's where the cult comes in. The cult worships Erebos, an ancient plague deity. Erebos 'blesses' his followers with a form of immortality... which is accompanied by a host of noxious and foul disease. The cult make their offerings by infecting wayward travelers with the plague."

**BEST SCREENPLAY: PILOT/SHORT**  
**THE SYNDICATE** by Trevor Renney

We were particularly fascinated by THE SYNDICATE because it tackles zombies in a new and surprising way: as part of a crime organization in Las Vegas. There are a lot of dark and ugly goings-on—corrupt cops, drug deals, gambling addiction—that make zombie flesh-eating seem almost pedestrian, and give rise to questions about who the actual monsters are.

**Trevor Renney:** "I've always gotten a kick out of trying to scare people around the campfire and spent a lot of time doing that as a kid, so once I had gotten the idea to write screenplays, my mind went right to horror. The initial inclination to humanize [the zombies] came from simply growing tired of the genre. I'm sure I'm not the first one to do it, but my answer became 'Well, what if the zombies aren't stupid?' It occurred to me that they'd have to live in the shadows and be pretty organized. This script was just the pilot, but as the series goes on, the idea is to jump back to various time periods over the past century to see who these people were when they were living, what mistakes they made, what shaped them into criminals, and then see how each of them were killed and how they rose from the dead into the ranks of The Syndicate."

**FORREST JACKERMAN SCREENPLAY AWARD**  
**THE CURSED FLESH** by Anders Nelson

As soon as we read THE CURSED FLESH, we knew we had to give it a special award, because we had never read anything like it: a high school boy, about to be sent off to the military, becomes patently obsessed with a violent horror film—one scene in particular—and ends up acting it out with his female theater director, over and over again, like a fetish. The emotions portrayed in the screenplay run the gamut from contentment to terror, and its unique setting of early 1950s McCarthyism adds a thick, almost suffocating atmosphere of paranoia.

**Anders Nelson:** "I can easily point out the moment that CURSED FLESH was born. I'd always read a fair amount, but [college] was my first real exposure to academic writing, let alone critical theory on horror movies. Nearly all of it reached a creative dead end when forced to address the only question worth asking: why people would voluntarily seek out films designed to induce feelings evolution has taught us to avoid. I'm paraphrasing from distant, distant memory, but the most ridiculous of these suggested that audiences were drawn to see how a director resolved the issue of a monster's impossibility. I think I might have thrown the book against the wall in disgust... Unlike the decades on either side, I've always felt that the early 1950s were a little underexplored creatively. It was a time period that had just seen the greatest shake-up in world politics in at least a century. It was the moment that we as Americans began to think of ourselves as an empire, and that carried a lot of angst with it, both because it came at the cost of 60 million lives, and this newfound status would have to be held against the existential threat of the Soviet Union. To say the very least, it brought out something very reactionary, xenophobic, and downright weird in a lot of people."



# JOHN ALAN ARMSTRONG

1957-2014

Al, as we called him, was my friend. But beyond that, he was my comic book guy. Contrary to the idea that comic book guys are smarmy business owners with a disdain for their customers like the character of the same name on *THE SIMPSONS*, they are actually one of the final connections to the "mom and pop" model of stores, where customers are more like family and less like numbers on a spreadsheet.

One of the most common stories shared with me by longtime readers of FM is how they found their first issue. It often involves allowance money, a bike, and a comic book shop. Many of you had your own comic book guy who introduced you to FM. There is little doubt that many of us spent hours in comic shops where we were exposed to so many incredible works that grabbed our imaginations and influence us still. The comic shop and its proprietor are as much a part of the history and culture of FM as Universal monsters.

When I started collecting comics in 1990 there were over a dozen comic shops in my area, including two that were only fifty feet apart. In the early 2000s real life pulled me away from the four-colored panels and the adventures within. By the time I was convinced (thanks Ash) in 2007 to get back into reading comics, only one shop remained: Al N' Ann's Collectibles in McHenry, IL, fifteen minutes from where I grew up (and the town that Kevin Smith's *DOGMA* opens in).

Upon entering the store for the first time, I was immediately greeted by a giant of a man with an even bigger smile. I don't remember how it all started, but within minutes of my first visit Al and I were chatting like old friends. We talked a little about comics, but he really just seemed interested in having a conversation. We talked pro wrestling, martial arts, guitars, blues, and his close friendship with horror host and Chicago icon Svenigoolie. When we concluded the conversation he made some suggestions. They were perfect. Because he had taken the time to know me he understood what I was looking for. This is the gift of the comic book guy. To understand the kinds of stories that will affect a person is to understand the person. Al cared that his customers enjoyed what they read. For the next three years I would be a weekly visitor. Al always greeted me, always smiled, always chatted, always had a recommendation ready, and never put pressure on me to buy anything. I brought friends to him, sometimes girls who were intimidated by an environment that is often thought to be a boys club. Al treated them all so well,

so respectfully—never made them feel bad for the comics they liked—that they all became regular customers. My mom even liked shopping there. But it wasn't until I moved to LA in 2010 that I learned what kind of a friend Al really was.

Sure, he worked tirelessly for Toys For Tots—a cause he was passionate about. Yes, knowing that his store attracted children he fought hard to keep more subversive elements from dominating the neighborhood. But he went so much further. Upon arriving in LA I had few friends, fewer work prospects, and was incredibly homesick. Knowing this, Al started sending me care packages with comics and collectibles. The first box showed up during week two in my new place. It contained issues of *LOBO* and Mickey Mantle Topps reproductions, two of my favorite things.

It was a profound gesture of kindness at a much needed time. Each Christmas I received a brick of his family's sumptuous peanut butter fudge. He emailed every week to check in on me. When I took over as the editor of FM (he was a longtime Monster Kid who read the mag growing up) he ordered more issues than the store could possibly sell. I would always stop by when visiting home where, upon seeing me, Al would jump up from his desk and envelop me in a giant bear hug, always smiling. That smile was enough to cheer up even the hardest of hearts. A few weeks prior to the last time I saw him, a person had lost control of their minivan and driven it through the front wall of the store, destroying the high dollar, rare collectibles. When he told me the story, he smiled, just happy that no one was seriously injured. We always chatted for hours during my visits. And every time a customer would come in he'd pick up a copy of FM and make sure they knew that I was the editor. He was so proud.

And this is why, years after all his competitors had gone out of business, he continued to thrive and maintain a very loyal group of patrons. There are those who say that when someone passes on the world gets a little darker, especially one whose light shone as brightly as Al's. I disagree. Through his kindness, his sincerity and care for his fellow human being, through the stories he recommended, he passed a light. That light, collectively, will shine brighter than anything he could have imagined. We will carry Al in our hearts. We will tell his story. We will pay his kindness forward. The world is a better place for having had him in it. We miss you, Al. While the thought of walking into the store for the first time without you there to hug me is overwhelming, my life is better for having called you friend. You were my friend... my comic book guy.





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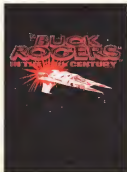
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*"When you have to shoot, shoot. Don't talk."*

*-Eli Wallach, 1915-2014*

*as Tuco,*

*THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY (1966)*



## NEXT ISSUE:

**IT'S ALL IN THE REFLEXES:** Take a ride on the Pork Chop Express as we journey back to a magical time known as the 80s and look at John Carpenter's classic **BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA**.

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